
RHETORIC & PERSUASION in Fall 2020 (CM3052)

Course Code	CM3052	Professor(s)	Justin McGuinness
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-402
Class Schedule	M: 18:10-19:45 in C-102 R: 12:40-14:15 in C-102	Office Hours	Thurs period 4, 16h20-17h55 in room 402 in Grenelle building, or by prior appointment.
Credits	4	Email	jmcguinness@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2020	Office Tel. Ext.	575

Course Description

Verbal communication is central to the success of the human species – along with other forms of communication, visual, kinetic, haptic. Building on an earlier course in the Global Communications degree, namely CM2004, Comparative Communications History, an examination of the development of human communication practices and technologies, CM3052 focuses on human communication as being a fundamentally persuasive practice. Starting with an examination of certain key texts relative to rhetoric and its theorization, the course becomes more practical in its second half with students producing persuasive speeches of their own for peer evaluation as well as participating in a class debate.

The **central texts** of this course are Plato's *Gorgias*, often considered, along with another dialogue, *Phaedrus*, to mark the beginning of reflection on communication in the ancient Mediterranean lands. Students will then read a small number of speeches and texts examining the nature of rhetoric in cultures markedly different from each other in time and place. These include persuasive speech from Thucydides, the Imam 'Ali, Frederick Douglass, Emile Zola, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela. Furthermore, students will discover how specific word forms and images are used to convince different audiences.

In the **second half** of the term, the focus of the course shifts to **production**. What modes of rhetoric can we identify in the multitude of texts, images and sounds that surround us? What has been the impact of the expansion of digital media on rhetorical forms since the end of the last century? Having thought about how the tools of rhetoric, first theorized over two thousand years ago, have been used in different contexts, students are asked to use these tools themselves to make persuasive appeals and sway an audience. As a final exercise, they will also participate in an in-class debate on a question chosen by the group.

From this class, students will acquire a heightened sense of how human beings are persuaded of the justness or wrongness of certain practices or ideas, noting that rhetoric can be a voice of dogma, ideology and a practice calling people to political commitment, action and even revolution.

VISITS:

There will be at least one out-of-class visit (dates and time to be announced) to a major Paris museum.

Course Learning Outcomes

To gain a richer understanding of the history of rhetoric and the debates surrounding its role and function in society.

To become familiar with the major rhetorical figures and schools, while examining their methods of constructing rhetorical appeals and of conducting rhetorical analyses.

To interrogate the nature of 'persuasion' in terms of what makes certain modes of discourse more persuadable than others in given situations.

To become more practiced in determining the best means of analysis in given rhetorical situations and to be able to deploy different methods of rhetorical analysis

To become more practiced in determining the best means of persuasion in given situations and to be able to make productive use of various rhetorical appeals.

General Education

In taking course CM 3052; students will expand their thinking in the following areas:

1. Historical knowledge. They will gain an understanding of the history of rhetoric, including the debates surrounding its role and affordances in different societies. They will also be familiar with certain rhetorical schools and how they envisaged strong persuasive speech.

2. Theoretical foundations and recent developments in communications studies. Students will become aware of positions on rhetoric taken by certain key communications theorists, including most notably Plato and Aristotle.

3. Global perspectives. The course is taught from a strongly comparativist perspective, with students being encouraged to think of how rhetoric has developed in several different periods

and places, notably ancient Hellenic city-States, the pre-modern Islamic world, nineteenth century France and North America and twentieth century South Africa.

5. Practical skills. Students will gain experience in speaking to their peers in preparation for speaking before bigger and unknown audiences in professional life. This will be based on a reflection on how certain modes of speech or image are more effective in certain situations than in others.

These outcomes are aligned with **student learning outcomes numbers 1, 2, 3 and 5** for the Department of Global Communications:

(1) Student work shows **knowledge of the history of communications** and the development of communications as an academic discipline.

(2) Student work shows **in-depth knowledge of the theoretical foundations and recent developments in particular areas of communications study**.

(3) Student understands and is able to **compare systems of media, communications and culture from a global perspective**.

(4) Student work shows ability to make use of research methods, including historical, textual, qualitative and quantitative, in order to write and present research. (Not applicable to this course).

(5) Student is able to apply **practical skills important to careers in communications**.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By taking this course, students will be able to answer these **critical analytic questions**:

- Why did rhetoric as a theorized practice emerge in fifth century Athens and the Hellenic world?
- How and why was the study of rhetoric of importance in certain times and places?
- How can the interface between communications technologies and rhetoric be theorized? What are the key variables?
- How has rhetorical practice varied across time and cultures? How do different media environments shape rhetoric?
- Who are some of the central figures in rhetoric and what is their contribution? Speeches studied include pieces by Thucydides, Saint Mathew as imagined by Pier-Paolo Pasolini, the Imam 'Ali, Frederick Douglass, Emile Zola, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela

Students taking CM 3052 will also have experience in the following **skills**:

- read academic text for argument and detail, and to develop a point of view on how the argument is being made;
- understand the structure of academic work in communications studies and be able to read with some confidence the main parts of an academic book chapter or paper (abstract, research questions, discussion of substantive area, methodology, construction of a corpus of data, analysis);
- develop argument in speech and/or image to an audience, using visual software if appropriate;
- participate in a formal debate on a communications related issue, and reflect on the effectiveness of this particular mode of rhetorical communication.

Course Outline

September

Week I – 23rd – 25th

24th September. Introduction to the course. Aims and assignments. Where does the North Atlantic tradition of rhetoric come from? Nuances of a term. A comparative approach to the arts of rhetoric and persuasion in a Global Communications degree.

Week II – 28th – 2nd

From **week II** onwards, students will **present pieces of rhetoric, articles or book chapters to the class**, either alone or in pairs. The presentations will relate the text to the broader themes covered in the course.

Theme 1: Rhetoric examined: populist rhetoric in contemporary media

Monday 27th September In-class study of a fragment of populist media rhetoric.

Thurs 01st October Student presentation of samples of populist rhetoric from different language and cultural areas.

October

Week III – 5th – 9th

Theme 1 (continued): Rhetoric examined: speech in the ancient Mediterranean

Monday 05th October Notes on classical Athenian society. Discussion of *Gorgias* by **Plato**.

Background text: Herrick (2005) chapter 2, “The origins and theory of early rhetoric”.

Thursday 08th October. Further discussion of *Gorgias* by Plato.

Week IV –12th – 16th

Theme 1 (continued): Rhetoric examined: visual rhetoric in the ancient Mediterranean

Monday 12th October Architectural resonances. How did classical buildings speak? What was the nature of their audience? Discussion of extracts from George Hersey’s *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture* (1988).

Thursday 15th October The Statesman as speaker: on the rhetoric of Pericles as presented by Thucydides in his work on the Peloponnesian War.

Week V – 19th – 23rd

Theme 1 (cont): Rhetoric examined: more on public speech in the ancient Mediterranean.

Monday 19th October

Further discussion of the rhetoric of Pericles.

Thursday 22nd October

More Hellenic thinking on the art of speaking well. For discussion: Herrick (2005) chapter 4, "Aristotle on rhetoric"

Week VI – 26th – 30th

Theme 1 (cont): Rhetoric examined: public speech and monotheist belief

Monday 26th October

Rhetoric in the Christian tradition. Film: *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* by Pier-Paolo Pasolini.

Thursday 29th October

Rhetoric in the Christian tradition. Discussion of *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*.

Week VII – 2nd – 6th

Rhetoric examined: public speech in the service of the nation-State

Monday 2nd November

South Africa– rhetoric and democratic hopes. On the public speech of Nelson Mandela. For discussion: extracts from Philippe Salazar’s *An African Athens. Rhetoric and the shaping of democracy* (2002).

Theme 1 (cont): Rhetoric examined: public speech and monotheist belief

Thursday 5th November

Rhetoric in the Islamic tradition. The road to eloquence: the rhetoric of Imam Ali. Optional reading: Qutbuddin (2012) “The sermons of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib”.

Week VIII – 9th- 13th

Monday 09th November

Turkey, rhetoric and nationalist ideology: Kemalism, the *Nutuk*; the *Izmir marsi* – patriotic sentiment through music and video. Texts for discussion TBA.

Wednesday 11th to Sunday 15th November. BREAK (no classes)

Week VIII (bis) – 16th- 20th

Monday 16th November

Theme 1 (cont): Rhetoric examined: the rhetoric of resistance

Extracts from *Germinal* by Zola.

Thursday 20th November

First day of student thematic speeches.

Week IX – 23rd – 27th

***Theme 2* (cont): Rhetoric in production**

Monday 23 November

Student thematic persuasive speeches

Thursday 26th November

Student speeches

Week X - 30th – 4th

***Theme 2* (cont): Rhetoric in production**

Monday 30th November

Student speeches

Thursday 03rd December

Student speeches

December

Week XI – 7th – 11th

Theme 2 (cont): Rhetoric in production

Monday 7th December

Last student speeches

Thursday 10th December

Preparation for final debate, to be held in the exam session.

December 11th, last day of classes.

December 12th - 15th, reading days

16th to 22nd December: Final examinations. For CM3052, a debate accounting for 40% of grade, including 30% on actual production and participation and 10% on reflection on the debate.

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Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member

might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

For any class you may miss, inform the professor on jmcguinness@aup.edu

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

In all cases of missed course meetings, the responsibility for communication with the professor, and for arranging to make up missed work, rests solely with the student. Travel plans, *especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods*, must be made with attendance requirements in mind.

Grading Policy

GRADING POLICY:

There follow a list of grades and the sort of performance expected to achieve each grade. These standards are followed in all courses in the Department of Global Communications. They are held to reflect lecturers' common sense vision of what constitutes student work at each grade level.

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES: The course involves a large amount of reading. Your understanding of the texts will be monitored in a number of ways, including:

A Almost always in class on time. Fully prepared to participate in class. Has done all the relevant reading and sometimes more. Outstanding performance in tests and examinations. Writes clearly and concisely.

B Almost always in class on time. Frequently participates in both class discussion and group work. Tries hard in examinations and writes well.

C Average effort. Sometimes late. Not always ready to participate but pays attention. On the whole has read the required texts.

D Generally unprepared and this is reflected by an unwillingness to participate in class discussion. Uses class time for other activities. Generally uninterested in course material.

F No evidence of preparation for class. Often late or absent. Fails to hand in assignments on time. Misses more than three classes without proof of a legitimate reason.

Assignments

Grades will be given on the basis of the following assignments

Presentation of an article, book chapter or piece of rhetoric – 10%

Five minute 'lucky dip' speech – 10% (between week 4 and week 8)

Major thematic speech to class – 30% (between 30th November and 7th December)

Note for colleague on their thematic speech – 10% (due in class after speech given).

Debate – 40% of grade, including 30% on actual production and participation and 10% on reflection on the debate.

1. Assignments related to readings or class activities – 60% of grade.

Presentation of an article, book chapter or piece of rhetoric – 10%

Five minute 'lucky dip' speech – 10% (between week 4 and week 8)

Major thematic speech to class – 30% (between 30th November and 7th December)

Note for colleague on their thematic speech – 10% (due in class after speech given).

2. Final debate – 40% of grade.

Debate to be held in final exam period on **Thursday 17 December at 20h.**

For those students who are active speakers, a short note on their preparations for the debate to be handed in at the final exam, via email.

For those students who are audience members, a reflective essay on the debate to be handed in via email on **Saturday 19th December at 15h30** (10% of grade)

(Any homework to be handwritten or typed on A4 paper, in TNR font, size 11, spacing 1,5)

Other
