

English 502

History of Rhetoric I: Antiquity to the Renaissance

Spring 2015
MW 5:15-6:45 p.m.
Class Meeting Room: Padre Rubio 15

Instructor: Paul Lynch
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Office Hours: T, 2-5 p.m.,
SIH 319

Course Introduction

In the *Iliad*, Phoenix reminds Achilles, who has petulantly (or perhaps justly?) quit the fight, that he has been taught to be “a speaker of words and a doer of deeds.” This ideal insists that the orator not only speak rightly, but also behave rightly. Many centuries later, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian, following Cicero would reformulate this ideal as the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*—the good man speaking well. Much of the ancient rhetorical tradition is predicated on the assumption that instruction in oratory will cultivate not only good speakers, but also good citizens. Yet there were also those who dismissed oratory, or rhetoric, as the art of making the worse argument appear to be the stronger argument. A good citizen, reasoned Plato, would not have much need of rhetoric; it was the bad citizen who needed to dress up his sophistry in sweet words. For Plato, and his teacher Socrates, rhetoric was a threat to the good, not a means to the good. Two millennia later, this debate persists: listen to any political campaign, and you are sure to hear one candidate accuse the other of using “mere rhetoric.”

In English 502, we will examine the ancient beginning of this debate and try to discover what was at stake for our forebears (and perhaps what is at stake for us). Our reading will include the dreaded sophists, Plato’s attacks on them, and Aristotle’s attempt at a third way. We’ll then move to the Roman period and read Cicero’s attempts to adapt the Greek ideal to his own time and place. We’ll then examine Augustine’s adaptation of rhetoric to Christian preaching, and eventually we’ll arrive at the Renaissance and analyze Castiglione’s attempt to refashion rhetoric for courtly life.

We’re stick largely to these five major authors not merely because they are representative and important, which they are, but also because I want to read them slowly and carefully. There are lots of things I’m leaving out: many of the sophists, Quintilian, any mention women (who won’t appear in our texts until Castiglione’s *Courtier*). These are obvious problems with the syllabus I’ve designed. But I think we should risk those problems if it allows us to focus and concentrate on a few major texts so that we can really soak them in. What we’ve after here is what we might call *slow reading*, in which we pay very close attention to fewer texts rather than paying scattered attention to several texts. To this end, our conversation and study will focus largely (though not exclusively) on five major themes:

1. **The Question of Invention**, which rhetoricians define as the creation/discovery of arguments.
2. **The Question of Wisdom vs. Eloquence**, the long-standing tensions between philosophy and rhetoric.
3. **The Question of *Techne***, or whether rhetoric either is a true art that can be taught, or a knack that some have and some don’t.
4. **The Question of Audience**, or whether rhetoricians can be trusted to speak ethically to audiences of non-experts.
5. **The Question of Style**, particularly its relationship to invention.

We won’t talk only about these issues, but we’ll spend a lot of time on them.

Required Texts

Plato, *Four Key Dialogues*, 978-1880393338

Isocrates, *Volume II*, 0674992520

Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 2nd ed. 978-0195305098

Cicero, *On the Orator*, 978-0195091984

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier* 978-0393976069

Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian...*, 978-0807847695

Reading and Participation

Obviously, you know what you need to do here: read the texts, take notes, mark ‘em up, and come prepared to discuss them. I expect everyone to chime in every class period. Now, I’m not going to keep track with a stopwatch, but then again this is a grad course, so I’m sure you know what to do.

This is worth 10% of the grade.

Short Essays

Several times during the semester, I’ll ask you to bring a single-sided, single-spaced typed response to that week’s reading. (Fill up one page, but no more than one page. A second page should feature a Works Cited page.) The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to explore the readings, think aloud, etc. These are *essays* in the classic sense: I’m not expecting well-formed claims or rock-solid arguments, but rather careful thought and close reading...even if you’re not sure where your thoughts are going. Please be sure to quote the readings you’re citing. These will be due on *Wednesdays*. We’ll begin class by reading them aloud as a way to start discussion. There will be 8 of them. **These are worth 20% of the final grade.**

Final Exam

On the last day of the course, we will have a final exam. This will be a short-answer “blue book” type exam, which will consist of several questions and passage identifications. It will not be open-book. **The final is worth 20% of the grade.**

Dialogue Assignment

For the final assignment, we’re going to do something rather different than the traditional paper. I’m going to ask you to write a dialogue in the style of Plato, Cicero, and Castiglione. You will pick five characters from this list:

1. Socrates
2. Aristotle or Isocrates
3. Crassus or Antonius
4. Augustine
5. Pietro Bembo or Giuliano De Medici
6. Elisabetta Gonzaga or Emilia Pia

Your job is to write a dialogue among these characters. You should imagine a setting, an occasion, and a problem to talk about. You should then write a dialogue among the characters. That means writing original lines along with occasional quoting from the texts. (So, occasionally, you can write line where, say, Aristotle says, “Look, as I said in my *Rhetoric*, ‘Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion’ (1.2.1). And I still think that’s right. Here’s why....” The challenge here is to write original dialogue that adheres to the characters as they are suggested or revealed in the texts.

When I say that I want this to be a dialogue, I really mean a dialogue. You can write it in screenplay format, if you wish. I want you to be as creative, funny, clever, combative, etc., as you can be. Run with it. The main thing I'm going to be looking for is whether you are not only addressing a clear question throughout the dialogue (e.g., invention) and but also characterizing your characters plausibly (e.g., it would be strange to make Socrates start out as a fan of rhetoric, or Aristotle say that he doesn't care about categories). In other words, you need to reveal that you've carefully read the texts and understood them. Finally—and most, most importantly, *you also need to show where these characters disagree*. For example, if you put Socrates and Isocrates in conversation, they're going to have some stuff to argue about. **The dialogue will be 50% of the final grade.**

Course Policies

Deadlines

Assignments are due when they are due. For each day that an assignment is late, it receives a severe and even spiteful penalty. Seriously, though, turn in your stuff on time.

Attendance and Tardiness

Regular attendance is expected, and is fundamental to your success in this class. You may therefore have **three absences** over the course of the semester. If you go over three absences, you will lose 5 points from your final average (i.e., if you earn an 85 for your final grade but have four absences, your grade becomes an 80. Nine unexcused absences will result in an absence through failure (AF). In addition, do not arrive late to class. Consistent tardiness (3 or more) will be counted as one unexcused absence.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to your course instructor, who will investigate and adjudicate them according to the policy on academic honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion by the University.

Disability Services Academic Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

College of Arts and Sciences Grading Scale

3.9 – 4.0	A	2.6 – 2.8	B –	0.9 – 1.5	D
3.6 – 3.8	A –	2.2 – 2.5	C+	0.0 – 0.8	F
3.2 – 3.5	B+	1.9 – 2.1	C		
2.9 – 3.1	B	1.6 – 1.8	C –		

College of Arts and Sciences Grading Scale (converted)

A	94-100	B	84-86	C-	72-70
A-	90-93	B-	82-80	D	69-60
B+	87-89	C+	79-77	F	59 and below
		C	76-73		

Weekly Schedule

M, Feb 16:	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> Homer, <i>The Iliad</i> , Books II and IX (online) Kennedy, Chapters 1-2	M, Apr 6:	Cicero, <i>On the Orator</i> , Intro & Bk 1 Kennedy, Chapter 5-6
W, Feb 18:	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> Gorgias, <i>Encomium</i> (in Aris.)	W, Apr 8:	Cicero, <i>On the Orator</i> , Bk 2
M, Feb 23:	Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> Protagoras, <i>Fragments</i> (online) Kennedy, Chapter 3	M, Apr 13:	Cicero, <i>On the Orator</i> , Bk 3
W, Feb 25:	Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> Short Essay 1	W, Apr 15:	Cicero, <i>On the Orator</i> Augustine, <i>Christian Doctrine</i> , Intro, Preface, Bk 1 Short Essay 6
M, Mar 2:	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i> "Rhetorical Handbooks" (in Aris.) Kennedy, Chapter 4	M, Apr 20:	Augustine, <i>Christian Doctrine</i> , Bk 2-3 Kennedy, Chapters 7-8
W, Mar 4:	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i> Short Essay 2	W, Apr 22:	Augustine, <i>Christian Doctrine</i> , Bk 4 Short Essay 7
M, Mar 9:	Isocrates, <i>Antidosis</i> & <i>Sophists</i>	M, Apr 27:	Castiglione, <i>Courtier</i> , Intro & Bk 1 Kennedy, Chapter 10 Assignment of Comprehensive Essay
W, Mar 11:	Isocrates, <i>Areopagiticus</i> Short Essay 3	W, Apr 29:	Castiglione, <i>Courtier</i> , Bk 2 Short Essay 8
M, Mar 16:	Isocrates, <i>On the Peace</i> & <i>Panathenaicus</i>	M, May 4:	Castiglione, <i>Courtier</i> , Bks 3-4 Kennedy, Chapters 11-12
W, Mar 18:	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> , Intro & Bk 1 Short Essay 4	W, May 6:	Final Exam
M, Mar 23:	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> , Bk 2 ¹ Plato, <i>Ion</i>	M, May 11:	Dialogue Due
W, Mar 25:	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> , Bk 3 Short Essay 5		
M, Mar 30:	No classes for Holy Week		
W, Apr 1:	No classes for Holy Week		

¹ On this evening, Dr. Georgia Johnston from SLU-St. Louis will be offering a lecture titled *Cultural Misfits: Gender in early Twentieth-Century Literature*. We'll end class a little early, and I strongly encourage you all to attend.