Classics/POSC222 – Political Rhetoric

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**Assignment #1: Democratic Rhetoric**

Our readings and discussions have focused on the place of rhetoric in democratic politics. Is rhetoric useful for furthering a successful democratic politics – one that upholds and enacts democratic ideals? Or is rhetoric a threat to democracy, incorporating illusions and fantasies into public discourse, obstructing any ground for serious political judgment? Consider Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*. There, Thucydides offers us his views on citizenship and civic identity through the mouthpiece of the Athenian statesman Pericles. But is this view of democracy itself democratic? Does Pericles’ rhetoric help or hurt the project of democracy?

Your question: **What is democratic rhetoric?**

In the following paper (in 5-6 pages: 1250-1500 words), analyze Perciles’ oration and contrast that with Plato’s arguments on the role of rhetoric in democracy. You should choose from at least two of the following texts to outline your critique: The *Phaedrus*, The *Menexenus*, and The *Gorgias*.

On your way to answering this question, consider the following: What makes rhetoric democratic or antidemocratic? Is it the object of the rhetoric or its function (content or form or both)? How does rhetoric help or hurt democratic politics? What kind of rhetoric is useful for furthering democratic citizenship?

Please cite both authors to support your argument. (NB: You ***MUST*** have textual evidence to justify your claims.)

**Papers are due to the CMS dropbox by 11:59pm on October 11th. Upload your paper using the filename format “your\_last\_name\_paper\_1”, but substituting your last name for the string “your\_last\_name”. For example, use “smith\_paper\_1” if your last name is “smith”. If you experience any technical problems while uploading your paper, you may email it to us (by the deadline) and post your copy as soon as the problems have been resolved. You must also bring one paper copy to class on the 12th.**