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Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-3:20PM in 115 Fayerweather Hall

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**CLASSICS / POLITICAL SCIENCE 222**

**Political Rhetoric**

***-Introduction-***

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion, of using language – both written and oral – to convince others of one’spoint of view. Yet many perceive such convincing as dangerous, especially to democracies where individual voice matters so much to politics. The line between persuasion and manipulation is not always clear, and the effects of crossing it can be incredibly corrosive. How and when should we be rhetorically persuasive? Which rhetorical techniques are persuasive and how do they operate? To what extent do rhetoric and persuasion determine our understanding of politics? When might persuasion prove dangerous to politics?

This course investigates the history and theory of political rhetoric. We will revisit classical debates on the use and function of rhetoric in politics, as well as modern reflections on this tradition. In close engagement with key texts of the rhetorical tradition from Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, our task will be to uncover precisely how ancient conceptions of rhetoric developed, exploring how rhetoric was viewed as both dangerous and necessary to successful governance. Building on these models, the course concludes with an examination of more recent theoretical discussions, reflecting on the development of attitudes and ideas about the rhetorical craft in modern and contemporary political thought. Throughout the course we will continually test our theorizing through analysis of the rhetoric employed in a variety of important historical political speeches. These investigations should allow us to discover the risks and rewards of persuasion for our own political lives.

***-Course Requirements-***

There are **~~five~~** **four** requirements for this course:

1. 5-6 page (1250-1500 word) paper on the subject of rhetoric and democracy. Topics will be distributed Wednesday October 5th; papers will be due at 11:59PM on October 11th. You must post a copy of your paper to the CMS site by this time. In addition, you are required to bring one hard-copy to class the next day – 20%

~~2. 5-6 page paper on the mechanics of persuasion. Topics will be~~

~~distributed on October 26~~~~th~~~~; papers will be due at 11:59PM on November~~

~~2~~~~nd~~ ~~. You must post a copy of your paper to the CMS site by this time.~~

~~In addition, you are required to bring one hard-copy to class the next day – 20%~~

3. 7-8 page (1750-2000 word) paper on principled persuasion. Topics will be distributed

On Monday November 14th; papers will be due at 11:59PM on Sunday November

27th. In addition, you are required to bring one hard-copy to class the next day – 30%

4. 8-10 page (2000-2500 word) paper on rhetoric and contemporary life. Topics will be

distributed on Monday December 5th; papers will be due by posting them to the CMS site by Tuesday December 13th at 11:59PM. In addition, you are required to

bring one hard-copy to class the next day – 40%

NB: In lieu of or as part of the final paper, it may be possible to giving a speech

during the last week of class. Details will be given on this assignment during the

semester. See the brief description below.

5. Attendance and participation in the course – 10%

**Late Papers**: Except in documented cases of serious emergency, late papers will receive a 1/3 grade penalty for each calendar day the paper is late. All papers must be uploaded to the CMS site. Late is defined as posted to the CMS site after 11:59PM on the due date. Turning in a paper copy does not relieve you of the obligation to post a copy of every paper to the CMS site by the deadline.

***Important Notes on Expectations for this Course***

**Abide by the Honor Code of the college**. In writing your papers you must provide documentation for ideas that are not your own (citation of material). Responsible collaboration on daily assignments is not contrary to the Honor Code; effective team-work is recommended.

Surprise! Any and all forms of plagiarism will not be tolerated and are contrary to the College Honor Code. You already know this.

Consult the following document and, if you still have questions, please talk to the instructor:

<https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/code/code>

We reserve the right to use all available methods, including on-line or commercial verification products, to ensure that one, any, or all papers have not made inappropriate use of other material (plagiarism, copying, etc.). Be aware of the considerable writing requirements of this class and plan accordingly.

**Accommodations for Students:**

If you have a disability which may necessitate special accommodations of any kind, please let me know outside of class during the first week of term. I may request formal notice from a class dean or other authority.

If you anticipate religious observances that will interfere with your class participation, I would appreciate your letting me know well in advance so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

**Possible Alternative Final Assignment**

This course will likely have an oral option in lieu of the final paper. This involves composing and delivering a speech *viva voce*, based on the principles, ideas, and strategies explored in the course. Only a select number of students will be allowed this option, but we hope it will give you a chance to analyze and synthesize many of the aspects of rhetoric that you have learned about during the semester.

***-Texts-***

The following books are available for purchase at Amherst Books:

# Plato – *Plato: Gorgias, Menexenus, Protagoras* (Cambridge)

Plato – *Phaedrus* (Hackett)

Lippmann – *Public Opinion* (Free Press)

Dewey – *The Public and its Problems* (Swallow)

Aristotle – *The Art of Rhetoric* (Penguin)

Aristotle – *Politics* (Cambridge)

*American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Library of America)

*American Speeches: Political Oratory from Lincoln to Bill Clinton* (Library of America)

Cicero – *On The Ideal Orator* (Oxford)

Cicero – *Ten Speeches* (Hackett)

The remainder of the readings will be available on course e-reserve.

***-Schedule and Readings-***

**Introduction**

September 7th – Politics and Rhetoric

September 12th – Public Opinion: Shaped by Elites

Reading: Lippmann—*Public Opinion* (chapters 1, 15-18, 20, 21)

September 14th – Public Opinion: Power of the Masses

Reading: Dewey – *The Public and Its Problems* (chapters 1, 4, 5)

**Part 1: Rhetoric and Democracy**

September 19th – The City and its Limits

Reading: Plato, *Phaedrus*, part 1 (read the whole work)

September 21st – Private and Public

Reading: Plato, *Phaedrus,* part 2

Reading: Biddy Martin “On the Question of Value” (on-line)

September 26th – Constructing Political Identity

Reading: Thucydides, *Pericles’ “*Funeral Oration for the Athenians” (on-line)

September 28th – Honest Speech

Reading: Plato, *Menexenus*

October 3rd – Learning Persuasion

Reading: Plato, *Gorgias,* part 1 (read the whole work)

October 5th – Democratic Rhetoric

Readings: Plato, *Gorgias,* part 2

Recommended: Isocrates, *Encomium of Helen* (available on-line)

**Part 2: The Mechanics of Persuasion**

October 12th – What makes a speech political?

Reading: George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” (available on-line)

October 17th – Political Animals

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics* Book 1

October 19th – Discourse and Democracy

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics* Book 3

October 24th – Kinds of Persuasion

Reading: Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.1-2.1 = -1354a-1378a

October 26th – Truth and Technique

Reading: Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.12-2.22 = 1389b-1397a

3.13-3.19 = 1413a-1420a

**Part 3: Persuasion and Principles**

October 31st – Contexts for Rhetoric

Reading: Cicero, *On the Orator*, ***Introduction*** to May and Wisse’s translation.

**Book I:** 1-113, 204-265.

November 2nd – Right and Persuasion

Reading: Cicero, *On the Orator* **Book II**: 1-40, 361-367.

**Book III:** 1-37, 56-90, 126-147, 228-230.

November 7th – Measuring Progress

Reading: Cicero, *In Defense of Marcus Caelius* (from Ten Speeches)

November 9th – Measuring Decline

~~Reading: Tacitus,~~ *~~Dialogue on the Orators~~* ~~(available on-line)~~

November 14th – The Purpose of Persuasion

~~Reading: Seneca the Elder,~~ *~~Suasoriae~~* ~~(“Persuasions”) (available on-line)~~

Reading: Cicero, *In Defense of Lucius Murena* (from Ten Speeches)

Also: pp. 105-111 for background on Catiline; xxviii-xxxi for Roman institutions

November 16th – Effective Speech

Reading: Martin Luther King “I Have a Dream…”

**Part 4: Rhetoric in Contemporary Life**

November 28th – Ancient and Modern

Reading: Nietzsche, “Lecture Notes on Rhetoric” (available on-line)

November 30th – How to Persuade

Readings: David Hume, “Of Eloquence” (available on-line)

JFK's inaugural address (available here) --> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2007/apr/22/greatspeeches>

December 5th – Fear of Others

Readings: Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (available on-line)

Selected Speeches

December 7th – Frank Speech

Readings: Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (available on-line)

Selected Speeches

**Conclusion**

December 12th – Our Own Words: In-class Speeches

December 14th – Copy of Final Paper Due, Evaluations

**Some Additional Readings on Rhetoric**

Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*

J. L. Austin, *How to do Things With Words*

Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*

Christina Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants: Plato’s Gorgias and the Politics*

*of Shame*

Sara Monoson, *Plato’s Democratic Entanglements*

Joy Connolly, *The State of Speech: Rhetoric and Political Thought in Ancient Rome*