HU2130 Introduction to Rhetoric

Room: 131 Fisher
Time: 9:35-10:50 TTh
Semester: Fall 2007

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Required Texts


Course Description

This course examines the classical origins, cultural contexts, and contemporary relevance of rhetorical traditions.

What is Rhetoric?

A simple answer to this question might be “the art of practical reasoning” or “the art of persuasion.” However, since it was first conceptualized in ancient Greece almost 2,500 years ago, rhetoric has been variously defined by its many theoreticians and practitioners. For example, Isocrates defined rhetoric (indirectly) as the art of determining “what we should do or what we should say”; Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion”; Donald Bryant defined rhetoric as “the function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas”; Robert Scott defined rhetoric as “not a matter of giving effectiveness to truth but of creating truth”; and Wayne Booth defined rhetoric as “the art of discovering warrantable beliefs and improving those beliefs in shared discourse.”
What is Conceptualized Rhetoric?

In the first edition of *Classical Rhetoric & Its Christian & Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (1980), George A. Kennedy says, “All arts, including the arts of discourse, employ techniques to accomplish their purposes. The author may know how to use these techniques, but he may never have taken thought to define them, catalogue them, or conceptualize them. That is, he may be unable to state general concepts describing what he does when speaking, even though he may be a good speaker. One of the most remarkable features of the classical period in Greece is the conscious conceptualization of human faculties, including grammar, rhetoric, logic, and poetics” (6).

Kennedy goes on to say that natural rhetoric occurs in all human societies, and he acknowledges that some degree of conceptualization of rhetoric occurred both in ancient India and in ancient China (for example, in Han Fei Tzu’s [c.a. 280-233 BCE] *Difficulties in the Way of Persuasion*). He claims, however, that “Neither in India nor in China . . . did rhetoric become a separate discipline with a fully developed theory, its own logical structure, and a corpus of pragmatic handbooks. Such a degree of conceptualization is apparently found only in the Greco-Roman world, where it begins to appear coincident with the rise of Greek philosophy and other forms of conceptualization in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.” (7).

This claim has been criticized as ethnocentric, and in the two decades since Kennedy published this work, much new research has been published on non-Western rhetorics. I suppose that similar criticisms might be raised against the claim that the art of war was first conceptualized in ancient China in Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, and that the art of love was first conceptualized in ancient India in Vatsyayana’s *The Karma Sutra*. In any case, it is still useful to examine (1) the social and political conditions that led to the conceptualization of rhetoric in ancient Greece; (2) the nature of that conceptualized rhetoric and the key issues that early rhetoricians and their philosophical opponents debated; and (3) the modern political and educational legacy of classical rhetoric.

Social and Political Conditions Leading to the Conceptualization of Rhetoric

The traditional story of the first conceptualization of the art of rhetoric in the ancient Greek world is the after the overthrow of the tyrant of Syracuse (ca. 467 BCE), numerous property disputes went before the courts (“Before the time of the tyrants, this land was my great-grandfather’s, and I want it back.”). An enterprising fellow named Corax reputedly observed a number of cases being tried and abstracted from his observations principles that could be taught (for a fee) to others in order to increase their chances of successfully pleading their cases. Corax and Tisias, who may have been Corax’s student, became renowned for their teaching. In 427 BCE, their fellow Sicilian Gorgias (480-375 BCE) became ambassador to Athens and brought with him a marked skill in rhetoric and a method of teaching it. For the Athenians, this was the equivalent of the British Rock Invasion.
This traditional story has been challenged by some modern scholars who wonder (1) if Corax and Tisias might be the same person (Corax means crow, an unusual name for a Greek, but perhaps a nickname for Tisias); and (2) whether either Corax or Tisias ever existed at all. In defense of the traditional story, oral traditions were passed on fairly reliably in ancient times—for about 600 years, for example, in the case of an oral tradition about the Trojan War. Aristotle, who flourished just a century later, reports the contributions of Corax and Tisias (e.g. *Rhetoric* 1402a11; see also Cicero’s report in *On Invention* [2.6] of Aristotle’s account of this tradition in his lost *Synagoge Tekhnon*).

In any case, one might ask why rhetoric took root in classical Athens. First, the rise of rhetoric in ancient Athens is probably overdetermined, not explainable by any single cause. The rise of literacy, the rise of democracy, and the rise of rhetoric seem to be intertwined, with each stimulating the other. Perhaps stimulating all three was perpetual Greek warfare and the discovery a vast lode of silver at Laurium (southeast of Athens) in 483 BCE. This silver financed Themistocles’ ambitious naval fleet program—enlarging the fleet from about 70 to about 200 (and subsequently about 300) triremes—and provided an incentive for enfranchising a broader cross section of Athenian society, including the poorer classes who serve as oarsmen on Athenian triremes, and, thereby, inspiring a more committed fighting force. As General Dwight Eisenhower said, “An aroused democracy is the most formidable fighting machine that can be devised.”

Some Traditional and Contemporary Issues in the History of Rhetoric

a. Can Rhetoric be Taught?

If lower classes of Athenians are to be inspired to serve valiantly in the Athenian navy, then they must be enfranchised and prepared to participate meaningfully in public deliberation. Those who professed the ability to teach this skill could become wealthy, as Isocrates did. The supporters of oligarchy and hereditary privilege, however, would claim that skill in public deliberation was innate and, implicitly, unique to the traditional upper classes. The rhetoricians would respond that this skill was *in part* innate, but in part also a function of training and practice.

b. Can Virtue be Taught?

One key concern in the various efforts to define rhetoric has been the notion of persuasion and the extent to which an emphasis on persuasion licenses deceit and manipulation. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, Socrates allows for the *possibility* of a noble rhetoric, but denies that such a rhetoric has ever existed:

I am content with the admission that rhetoric is of two sorts; one, which is mere flattery and disgraceful declamation; the other, which is noble and aims at the training and improvement of the souls of the citizens, and strives to say what is best, whether welcome or unwelcome, to the audience; but have you ever known such a rhetoric; or if
you have, and can point out any rhetorician who is of this stamp, who is he? . . . For, indeed, I do not know of such a man. (503)

Quintilian was also deeply concerned with these two sorts of rhetoric; as he wrote in his *Institutio Oratoria*:

Too much insistence cannot be laid upon the point that no one can be said to speak appropriately who has not considered not merely what it is expedient, but also what it is becoming to say. . . . these two considerations generally go hand in hand. . . . Sometimes, however, the two are at variance. Now, whenever this occurs, expedience must yield to the demands of what is becoming. . . . the end which the orator must keep in view is not persuasion, but speaking well, since there are occasions when to persuade would be a blot upon his honour. (XI.1.8-11)

More recently, in his book *Thought and Character: The Rhetoric of Democratic Education*, Frederick Antczak has characterized these two types of rhetoric as rhetoric of indulgence and rhetoric of reconstitution (8), and he suggests that for reconstitutive rhetoric to be successful, we need to redefine our conception of rhetorical success. As an alternative to a choice between either crass expedience or principled but futile discourse, Antczak offers reconstitutive rhetoric, which—following Donald Bryant—involves "adjustments of ideas to people and people to ideas— a mutual reconstitution of thought and character" (11).

c. Technical Skills vs. A Liberal Education

One common early criticism of instruction in rhetoric was that all that was being taught was a package of technical skills that any charlatan could use "to make the worse appear the better case." Isocrates, for one, responded that in his school, students would receive a broad education. This Isocratean tradition, passed on through Cicero, is the fountainhead for the Western conception of a liberal education, as manifested, for example, in general education programs.

d. The Scope of Rhetoric

Another key theme in the history of rhetoric is the distinction between contingent knowledge (the traditional realm of rhetoric) and certain knowledge or "truth" (the traditional realm of theology, philosophy, and, by some accounts, science).

Aristotle limits the scope of rhetoric to the forensic, deliberative, and ceremonial discourse: "The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities: about things that could not have been, and cannot now or in the future be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature wastes his time in deliberation" (*Rhetoric* 1.2.1357a5); "Most of the things about which we make decisions, and into which therefore we inquire, present us with alternative possibilities. For it is about our actions that we deliberate and inquire, and all our actions have a contingent character; hardly any of them are determined by necessity" (*Rhetoric* 1.2.1357a25).
Many contemporary scholars have suggested broadening this scope. For example, Carolyn Miller writes, "Over the centuries, we have become less certain than Aristotle was about many things, and what we call the *new rhetoric* reflects the extension of uncertainty to matters other than Athenian civic affairs--beyond ethics and politics to philosophy, science, and the academic disciplines in general; this extension represents what has been called the *rhetorical turn*. What is central to both the old, Aristotelian rhetoric and to this new, extended rhetoric is the function of deliberation, which is made possible and useful by uncertainty" (*The Rhetorical Turn*, p. 162).

In response, some have argued that the concept of rhetoric has become too broad and too vague. If, for example, we claim that all language or, even more generally, all symbol use is rhetorical, then, these critics argue, rhetoric becomes everything in general but nothing in particular. One defense of the broader definition of rhetoric is that rhetoric is not more diminished by claiming that all language or all symbol using is rhetorical than mortality is diminished by claiming that all humans are mortal.

e. Political vs. Literary Rhetoric

Another theme in the history of rhetoric is the tension between political rhetoric (civic discourse) and literary rhetoric (belles lettres), what Kennedy, following Vasile Florescu, refers to as *littaturizzazione*. As Brian Vickers notes, "For Isocrates ... rhetoric was the primary tool in education, and education was directed towards political activity and practicality. For Roman rhetoricians, above all Cicero, the link between rhetoric and the *vita activa* was fundamental. ... When rhetoric became corrupted [people] opted out of the active life" (*In Defence of Rhetoric*, 8). Tacitus was among the first to note that the shift to literary rhetoric, with an emphasis on style rather than invention, was a function of political oppression and the lack of (safe) opportunities deliberate public policy (Kennedy 111-112; Kinneavy in Murphy 26).

The Modern Political and Educational Legacy of Classical Rhetoric

The primary contribution of classical rhetoric to modern education and political life is providing an impetus for a liberal education that prepares citizens to be active participants in the civic life of their communities and in the larger world.

Reading, Class Discussion, and Quizzes

"We don’t understand anything until we’ve discussed it."

Russian Proverb

This course is based on common readings, on class discussion of those readings, and on your three essay assignments. We’ll focus primarily on what helps most to explain and contextualize both the conceptualization and teaching of rhetoric in ancient Greece and the debates that
surrounded this conceptualization and teaching. I expect everyone in the class to keep up with
the reading and to participate in class discussion on a regular basis.

We'll have three quizzes on our readings and class discussions.

Format of Essay Assignments

Your three essays should be word processed and printed on 8.5" x 11" white paper in a 12-point
font with one-inch margins on all four sides. Put your name in the upper right corner of the first
page, skip one line (i.e., single space) and put the course title (Introduction to Journalism); skip
another line, and put the date; skip one more line and put your proposed headline (centered), then
skip two lines and begin your double-spaced article. Number your pages, and staple your
papers in the upper left corner.

The Michigan Tech Writing Center

Michigan Tech has an excellent Writing Center, which is located in Walker 107. I encourage
you to schedule, regular weekly appointments with a writing coach. Establish a schedule early in
the semester, because appointed times (as opposed to drop-in times) tend to get booked quickly.
For more information, call 487-2007 or check the Center's Web page at www.hu.mtu.edu/wc/

Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined approximately as follows:

Up to 100 points for each of 3 reading and
discussion quizzes 300 points
Up to 100 points for each of 3 essays 300 points
Up to 200 points for participation in class
(up to 4 points per class period) 212 points
Up to 200 points for participation in brainstorming and
draft-review sessions (up to 50 points for each of 4 sessions) 200 points
Total 1012 points

Extra credit: 25 points for bringing to class before the end of week 3 the required texts with
your name permanently marked in or on them.

A: 930-1000 points
AB: 880-929 points
B: 830-879 points
BC: 780-829 points
C: 730-779 points

HU2130 Introduction to Rhetoric

Dr. Craig Waddell
Late Assignments

I won't accept any assignment that's more than two days late. There's no penalty for one late paper (as long as it's not more than two days late); subsequent late papers, however, will be lowered by one part of a letter grade (e.g., from a BC to a C).

Attendance Policy

"Eighty percent of success is just showing up." Woody Allen

Excused absences include (but are not limited to) a medical excuse signed by your physician or a personal emergency authorized in writing by the Dean of Students. For a more detailed description of what constitutes an excused absence, see the Michigan Tech Student Handbook
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/policies.html#integrity

I keep a record of attendance for two reasons:

1. Because if you’re doing poorly in class, these records can help me to determine if poor attendance is part of the problem.

2. Every professor at Michigan Tech is required to submit attendance-verification rosters. These rosters are used for two purposes:

a. To identify before it’s too late to make the appropriate corrections students who

   • think they are registered for a course, attend all semester and complete the work, but receive no grade at the end of the semester because they were never registered;

   • have never attended a class because they mistakenly think they have dropped the course and, hence, wind up receiving a failing grade at the end of the semester;

   • attend an incorrect section of a course and receive a failing grade at the end of the semester from the section for which they are registered but which they never attended.

b. To comply with federal law that stipulates that universities must verify that students who receive Title IV financial aid are attending the classes in which they are enrolled. (Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended in 1998 establishes general rules that apply to student financial assistance programs, including Pell Grants, Academic Competitive Grants, National SMART

**Policy on Religious Observance** (also from the *Michigan Tech Student Handbook*)

“Michigan Tech permits students to be excused from class on holidays observed by their religious faith. Students who wish to be absent for a religious holiday are responsible for making arrangements in advance with their instructors to make up classwork and exams. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of absences requested.”

**Michigan Tech’s Academic Integrity Policy**

“Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student’s education, and the ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s professional career. Academic honesty is essential in a community of scholars searching and learning to search for truth. Anything less than total commitment to honesty undermines the efforts of the entire academic community. Both students and faculty are responsible for insuring the academic integrity of the university.

This policy applies to the academic conduct of all persons at Michigan Technological University who have ever matriculated at the University, whether or not the person is enrolled at the time an allegation of academic dishonesty is made.

This policy addresses academic dishonesty in course work. Allegations of dishonesty in research or publication are addressed under the Scientific Misconduct Policy.

Procedures to ensure fairness and due process for all parties involved in any apparent violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will be developed, and periodically reviewed, by the Dean of Students Office in consultation with the members of the Academic Integrity Committee appointed by the University Senate.”

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

A **Plagiarism**: Knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation. This includes but is not limited to reading or hearing another’s work or ideas and using them as one’s own; quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another’s work without giving proper credit; purchasing or receiving another’s work and using, handling, or submitting it as one’s own work.

B **Cheating**: Intentional, unauthorized use of any study aids, equipment, or another’s work during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized use of notes, study aids, electronic or other equipment during an examination; copying or looking at...
another individual's examination; taking or passing information to another individual during
an examination; taking an examination for another individual; allowing another individual to
take one's examination; stealing examinations. All graded academic exercises are expected to
be performed on an individual basis unless otherwise stated by the instructor. **An academic
exercise may not be submitted by a student for course credit in more than one course
without the permission of all instructors. [Note: This is known as self-plagiarism.]**

C **Fabrication:** Intentional and/or unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or
citation during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to changing or adding
an answer on an examination and resubmitting it to change the grade; inventing data for a
laboratory exercise or report.

D **Facilitating Academic Dishonesty:** Knowingly or recklessly allowing or helping another
individual to plagiarize, cheat, or fabricate information.

Sanctions for academic dishonesty range from warnings to expulsion from Michigan Tech. For
more information, visit

http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

**The Americans with Disabilities Act**

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination,
including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need
a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr.
Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may
contact your advisor, your department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (7-3310).

**Schedule of Assignments and Class Activities**

Dates indicate when reading and writing assignments are due, not when they are given. I've
used the following abbreviations for our texts: **AG = Ancient Greece; IRT = Introduction to
Rhetorical Theory.** Please bring to class each day the book we are currently reading.

**Week 1:**

- **TU 9/4:** Class begins: introductions; overview of course/review syllabus
- **TH 9/6:** AG Preface, Introduction, and Ch. 1 Early Greece and the Bronze Age

**Week 2:**

- **TU 9/11:** AG Ch. 2 The "Dark Age" of Greece and the Eighth-Century "Renaissance"
- **TH 9/13:** AG Ch. 3 Archaic Greece (c. 700-500 BCE)

**Week 3:** Meet this week to brainstorm for essay #1

HU2130 Introduction to Rhetoric

9

Dr. Craig Waddell
TU 9/18: AG Ch. 4 Sparta
Film: The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization (Part 1); for further information, visit www.pbs.org/empires/thegreeks/
TH 9/20: AG Ch. 5 The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars

Week 4:
TU 9/25: AG Ch. 6 The Rivalries of the Greek City States and the Growth of Athenian Democracy
Film: The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization (Part 2)
TH 9/27: AG Ch. 7 Greece on the Eve of the Peloponnesian War

Week 5:
TU 10/2: AG Ch. 8 The Peloponnesian War; draft of essay #1 due
Film: The Greeks: Crucible of Civilization (Part 3)
TH 10/4: AG Ch. 9 The Crisis of the Polis and the Age of Shifting Hegemonies; reading and discussion quiz #1

Week 6: Meet this week to review draft of essay #1 and to brainstorm for essay #2
TU 10/9: IRT Ch. 1 The Eventfulness of Rhetoric
TH 10/11: IRT Ch. 2 Rhetorical Thinking

Week 7:
TU 10/16: Essay 1 due (1000-1500 words)
TH 10/18: IRT Ch. 3 Rhetorical Opportunities

Week 8:
TU 10/23: Draft of essay #2 due
TH 10/25: IRT Ch. 4 Making Commitments through Rhetoric

Week 9: Meet this week to review draft of essay #2 and to brainstorm for essay #3
TU 10/30: IRT Ch. 5 Public Judgment
TH 11/1: IRT Ch. 6 Finding Ideas; reading and discussion quiz 2

Week 10:
TU 11/6: IRT Ch. 7 Using Good Reasons to Persuade
TH 11/8 IRT Ch. 8 Persuasiveness of Character; essay #2 due (1000-1500 words)

Week 11:
TU 11/13: IRT Ch. 9 The Passions; draft of essay #3 due
TH 11/15 IRT Ch. 10 Narrative

11/17-11/25 Thanksgiving Break

Week 12: Meet this week to review draft of essay #3
TU 11/27: IRT Ch. 11 Acting with Language
TH 11/29: IRT Ch. 12 Experiencing Meaning in Rhetoric
Week 13:
- TU 12/4: IRT Ch. 13 Rhetorical Form as Strategy
- TH 12/6: IRT Ch. 14 Strategic Forms of Argument Structures

Week 14:
- TU 12/11: IRT Afterword; reading and discussion quiz 3
- TH 12/13: Essay #3 due (1000-1500 words); evaluations