

## RHETORICAL CRITICISM: MASTERPIECES OF RHETORIC (SPC 4680)

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Our focus is “masterpieces of rhetoric.” Although many are political discourse, another focus is rhetoric to persuade Americans about armed conflict abroad. Students will examine how some speakers, writers, and filmmakers appealed to attitudes and actions for profound influence upon future events. The goal of the course is students’ refined sense of important rhetorical principles and techniques by which their own discourse is persuasive.

Unlike previous semesters, the course now has *no* textbook because much of your course material is on-line at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speechbank.html>. Major class assignments are *group* projects. By the end of the third week, you should be in a group with 4-5 other students to write *collaboratively* discourse presented to the entire class for discussion and analyses, but these in-class speeches will *not* be graded. Instead, I grade individual students’ short papers identifying and evaluating rhetorical choices and techniques utilized in the *group* speeches as discussed in class. I will be naming, defining, and explaining rhetorical factors that you likely will find yourself using well (or poorly). A practical guideline for you to follow is this: if I write a term on the board, the concept should be understood by you, placed in your class notes, defined and understood, and thereby usable in your future.

I am convinced that when groups argue constructively among themselves about fulfilling assignments, final products are better. For example, after viewing Richard Nixon’s famous—or infamous—“Checkers” speech in 1952, we will study Senator Ted Kennedy’s *apologia* after Ms. Kopecne died late one night in his company. Then, groups of student speechwriters will create a TV speech that Bill Clinton *should have given* within 48 hours after Monica Lewinsky first became newsworthy. For affiliating with other students this semester, one speechwriting group should be *all* male and another *only* females; the rest can be any combination. Individuals’ short papers about group speeches yield one-third of students’ final grades. Please note: all short papers are due the meetings specified in the syllabus (you do not want to be writing *several* papers as the semester ends, and I do not wish to be inundated with an excessive number of other papers to grade while carefully evaluating your final exams and research papers).

Your individual short papers (2-3 typed double spaced pages at most) summarize and expand upon assigned readings that are downloaded, films, *and* group projects presented in class. The fifth short paper, exclusively an *individual* effort, will be the enthymeme assignment, which is any length necessary to attain the desired objective. A longer, *individual* final paper (7-8 typed pages) will report your individual *research* about some topic suggested by the course (its focus *must be developed in consultation with me* so I can endorse *in writing* to you its appropriateness). This paper constitutes another one-third of your final grade. The course also has a final exam during the period specified in the in the UF calendar for the final one-third of your grade. Please understand that group projects *require* meetings with your peers outside of regular class periods. You also are required to view some films outside of class, whether in groups or individually. As the course progresses this semester, I may amend the syllabus to take advantage of some current event as a topic for class consideration.

### Week                      Topic and Assignment

- 1                      Course overview; defining some essential terms: communication, rhetoric, *logos*, *pathos*, *ethos*, “orality,” “hot” vs. “cool” media, *apologia*, “representative anecdote,” and “rhetorical sensitivity,” and perhaps others as time permits. Do self-introductions as bases for forming groups. Other rhetorical factors will be introduced as they apply to later assignments.
- 2                      Lecture on *Ethos* and Source Credibility: View Richard Nixon’s TV “Checkers” Speech *in* class. *Before* class, read Ted Kennedy’s “Chappiquiddick” Speech; assign group project #1: “Bill’s speech about Monica” that *should* have been delivered within 48 hours after the story about Ms. Lewinsky first hit the media. This will be the basis for your short paper #1. Pay *particular attention* to a rhetorical concept known as the “representative anecdote.”
- 3                      Meet with your groups *during* the regular class meeting to prepare assignment #1 on Bill and Monica; I will be on hand as a resource person to consult with *all* groups, help them begin, and make sure that *all* students are “on track.” Initial discussion of term paper requirements also will be offered. As your

- ideas for term papers emerge during classes, I will suggest readings that likely will be of help to you.
- 4 Present groups' Bill's speeches for discussion; start writing **individual short paper #1**: how to write an effective apologia.
  - 5 John F. Kennedy in the 1960 TV presidential debates. View ABC Documentary in class. Examine 1960 Image study (class handout). As the next group project, write an "image" first TV presidential debate speech for any possible presidential candidate in 2016, including a woman (likely Hillary Clinton this semester). This will be the basis for **short paper #3**.
  - 6 John Wayne as "rhetorical identificand." View *Stagecoach* (1939 version) in class. Discussion of the other John Wayne Films you must view as rentals or online *before* class, including that about the *Searchers*, *Fort Apache*, and *They Were Expendable*. **Short paper #1 due**; begin writing **short paper #2**, identifying and explaining Americans' *continuing* frontier impulses. Assign "Walk-Off."
  - 7 Present group presidential speeches in class. These speeches are bases for **short paper #3**.
  - 8 Lecture on Opinion Leadership and writers of history as persuaders: Read from Frederick Jackson Turner's "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Carl Becker's "Kansas" (in class handouts). Your instructor will lecture about Karl Rove. Assign due date for "Walk-off."
  - 9 The Enthymeme as a potent form of rhetorical argument. Listen in class to Russell Conwell's opening to his oft-given speech (delivered back and forth across America for decades): "Acres of Diamonds." You *must* view the film *A Time to Kill* **before** class. Begin "debriefing" me for the enthymeme assignment, which will be **short paper #4** (the length of this paper is as long as you see fit). **Turn in "frontier" paper #2**.
  - 10 Basic Drives and Motivation, *Patton*, Identificands, and the Enthymemic Argument that persuaded President Nixon—and Americans—to continue waging war in Vietnam; before class, read from President Nixon's speeches about Vietnam and the Cambodian Incursion, specifically. *Continue* "debriefing" me for **paper #4**. Before class, I recommend you also view Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*.
  - 11 Douglas MacArthur: "one of the two most dangerous men" in America? Consider MacArthur's 1951 "Address to a Joint Meeting of Congress"; in class view documentary excerpts about MacArthur; as a group project, draft the Marine general's rebuttal to his "Inchon" speech (class handout). Furthermore, this period would be your absolute last chance at "debriefing" me for the enthymeme assignment. **Turn in short paper #3** about a current presidential candidate.
  - 12 Ronald Reagan as the "Great Communicator" on "Lebanon and Grenada." Lecture on patterns of persuasive organization of discourse. Report on planned Research Paper topics and your progress. I will advise you further about their suitability. **Turn in "enthymeme" paper #4**.
  - 13 Topic to be announced. As the course evolves, some newsworthy event or subject of interest may suggest—to you or me—some other topic from rhetorical theory that merits further lecture and discussion. A possible focus this semester may be radio demagogues, such as those of the past (Huey Long and Father Charles Coughlin) and present (Rush Limbaugh?)
  - 14 Present Inchon speech, which will be the basis for **short paper #5**.
  - 15 Review as necessary; evaluate the course. **Short paper #5**, and the research paper are due on the date and time listed in the UF Timetable for the formal exam period for the course.

*N.B.* This syllabus specifies meetings for 15 weeks rather than the customary 16 weeks of normal semesters. I often am invited for off-campus presentations during the semester, and I thus may have to miss a meeting or two. For an evening class, I suggest students not walk alone after class to dorms or where their cars may be parked.