Applications of Ancient Rhetoric in Contemporary Rhetoric & Composition

Course Description:

Classical rhetoric is concerned with the development of critical citizenship, the skills of thinking-through ethical and logical decisions and the ability to persuade audiences to support those decisions. In short, classical rhetoric is about teaching effective oral and written communication. As such, a course in classical rhetoric makes perfect sense in our English Studies program with its special emphasis on pedagogy (teaching theory). In fact, the word “pedagogy” comes from an ancient Greek term [paidagogos, (pais, boy + agogos, leader] for the servant responsible for taking care of and teaching the male children of wealthy Greek citizens. These male children of the economically and socially privileged were raised to be leaders of their nation states. Today, English Studies pedagogy shares many of the same aims regarding the development of ethical, critical citizenship, logical thinking and effective oral and written communication, though it operates from a different social agenda (at least some of us like to think so). The readings and topics for this course have been designed to highlight the links between classical rhetoric and the contemporary teaching of writing.

We will examine how classical rhetorics from the Greco-Roman tradition are studied and applied by contemporary composition teachers and theorists and how particular ancient rhetorics are used explicitly to inform the teaching of writing. We will also examine ancient rhetorics from non-western traditions that are beginning to make an impact on composition (including native American, Eastern and African rhetorics). To accomplish these goals we will read primary works of selected ancient Greek rhetoricians, recent explorations of ancient non-western rhetorics and contemporary American scholarship that uses classical rhetoric to theorize writing pedagogy.

Although this course highlights the pedagogical aspects of classical rhetoric, students who do not plan to become teachers themselves may find the course useful in considering the ways they have been developed as leaders (that is, part of the “college-educated elite”), effective communicators and critical citizens. Students may also use the course material to theorize the manner in which they will use language to succeed in whatever professional field they plan to enter.

As this is a reading intensive course, we will make much use of written responses to the reading. See below for more details on Weekly Reading Responses, Expanded Responses and Shared Responses. These responses are intended to facilitate in-depth thought and discussion about the readings we’ll complete for the course.
Required Texts:

- George Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*
- Substantial Reading Packet, To Be Announced
- Several Ancient Primary Texts will be distributed on-line without cost. Students may print the texts up at their own expense.

If affording these texts constitutes a hardship, please see the instructor so that arrangements can be made to ensure your ability to succeed in this class.

Course Components:

**Weekly Reading Responses**

Each week students should write and bring to class a 250-300 word response to one or more of the readings assigned for the week. Responses should be typed, single spaced and fit on one page. The Responses are intended to generate class discussion, and so they should ask provocative questions of, pose interesting problems for or make significant applications of the material under study for the week. These are high expectations for such short reading responses. Writers are advised to make every word count; that is, be effective rhetors.

Although Reading Responses will not be collected each week—rather they will be collected along with Expanded Responses (see below)—students should be prepared to use their responses during the class for which they are due. The instructor also reserves the right to collect and respond to individual Reading Responses when they are due.

**Expanded Reading Responses**

Twice during the semester (see Assignment Schedule for due dates), students will turn in Expanded Reading Responses. For this assignment, students should select any Weekly Response and revise and expand it. Undergraduates’ Expanded Responses should be 750-1000 words and Graduates’ should be 1000-1250 words. The Expanded Responses do not require additional research or formal citation: they are rather an opportunity for students to reflect back on their initial responses from a distanced and more critical perspective.

When students turn in Expanded Responses, they should be accompanied by all of the single-page weekly responses written up to that point—including the original draft of the response that has been revised and expanded.

**Shared Responses**

Approximately three times during the semester, students will share copies of their Weekly Responses and share them with the rest of the class. Ideally, we will read each response together and discuss the points raised in it for about 30 minutes. The writer sharing the response will facilitate the discussion with help (if necessary) from the instructor. Students who write compelling responses will have no trouble generating 30 minutes of discussion. Students may have the instructor print up copies their response if they email it to him up to 45 minutes before class.
**Major Project/Paper**

Each student will generate, in consultation with the instructor, a substantial paper or project related to classical rhetoric. Graduate student projects should be the equivalent of 4000-5000 words (about 16-20 pages) and undergraduate projects should be 2000-2500 words (about 8-10 pages). We will discuss project suggestions later in the course, but students will be welcome to write traditional research papers, compose informed-reflections on relevant topics, further expand an idea initiated in a Reading Response, weigh-in on a disciplinary debate or develop a pedagogical application of the course material. Students are encouraged to design projects that will have value to them beyond the bounds of this course. An inherently practical field, rhetoric is easily applied to a variety of contexts and aims.

The deadlines for this project are deliberately unusual, the proposal due fairly early in the course and the due date coming three weeks before the end of the course. These deadlines are intended to help students avoid the ordinary crush of paper writing that occurs at the end of each semester.

**Participation**

Active reading and writing, which are requirements for this seminar course, are collaborative skills that require effort, practice, and other people. Course practices will include informal writing, formal writing, small group collaborative activities, whole-class discussion, and reporting in small and large groups. Your participation and effort in all of these practices is required for this course. Your cheerful participation and determined effort will be most graciously appreciated. See below for the attendance policy.

**Midterm Exam**

The midterm exam will be the only exam in the course. The exam will be designed as practice for graduate student comprehensive/qualifying exams. There will be one or two essay questions for which students will have to reflect intelligently on the readings from approximately the first half of the course. Students will have two hours to write the exam. A computer lab will be reserved for those who would like to use a computer for the exam. More information will be given about the exam later in the course.

**Grades:**

Grades for the course will be based on the following:

- 25%: Major Paper/Project
- 25%: Weekly Reading Responses/Expanded Responses
- 15%: Shared Responses
- 15%: Midterm Exam
- 20%: Participation

**Note:**

You are responsible for keeping copies of all your work for this course in case any of it is misplaced (by you or me) before it can be credited toward your grade. (Accidents do happen even to the most careful among us; making copies of your work keeps misplaced papers from becoming a problem.)
Attendance:

In light of the collaborative nature of English Studies courses, attendance at every class is mandatory. In order to allow for emergencies, you will be allowed one unexcused absence from class; for absences beyond this, you must produce university-sanctioned documentation stating that you have been excused from class. Each unexcused absence beyond the first will result in a reduction in your class participation grade. Absence from more than three classes will likely result in failure of the course.

If you must miss a class for any reason, you should contact the instructor beforehand to turn in assignments due for the class that you will miss and to discuss possible extensions on assignments. You should also contact another student after that class to obtain any work that was assigned in your absence. Unless other arrangements are made with the instructor beforehand, all students are responsible for turning in all assignments on time regardless of their attendance.

Special Needs:

Any student in need of a special accommodation should contact 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD).
# English 391 Assignment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>First Day</td>
<td>Course Introduction, Syllabus Distribution/Discussion, What is Rhetoric in the tradition of Composition &amp; Rhetoric?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Day (Sorry, No Class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| January 27 | Ancient Rhetorics                          | Crowley & Hawhee Chpt. 1: “Ancient Rhetorics: Their Differences, and the Differences They Make” (On Line)  
| February 3 | Ancient Non-Western Rhetorics              | Kennedy Chpt. 5: “North American Indian Rhetoric;” Chpt. 6: “Literacy and Rhetoric in the Ancient Near East;”  
              | Chpt. 7: “Rhetoric in Ancient China;” and Chpt. 8: “Rhetoric in Ancient India” (In Kennedy Text) |
| February 10| Ancient Greek Rhetorics                    | Katula: “Greek Democracy and the Study of Rhetoric” (handout)  
              | Kennedy Chpt. 9: “Rhetoric in Greece and Rome”  
              | Welch: “Writing Instruction in Ancient Athens After 450 B.C.” (Reader)  
| February 17| Classical Rhetoric in Modern Composition    | Halloran: “On the End of Rhetoric, Classical and Modern” (Reader)  
              | Connors, Lunsford, Ede: “The Revival of Rhetoric in America” (Reader) |

**First Expanded Response & Weekly Responses Since 1/27 Due Anytime This Week**

---

1 Assignments should be read by the day they are listed.
### February 24

**Debates on Classical Rhetoric and Contemporary Composition Pedagogy**

- Knoblauch and Brannon: “Ancient Rhetoric in Modern Classrooms: That Old Time Religion” and “Understanding Modern Rhetoric: Some Misconceptions and Pseudoconcepts” (Reader)
- Quitman Troyka: “Classical Rhetoric and the Basic Writer” (Reader)

### March 3

**Rhetoric, Audience and Composition**

- Wiley: “The Pre-Classical Roots of the Addressed/Invoked Dichotomy of Audience” (Reader)
- Willard and Brown: “The One and the Many: A Brief History of the Distinction” (Reader)
- Miller: “Rhetoric and Community: The Problem of the One and the Many” (Reader)
- Park: “The Meanings of ‘Audience’” (Reader)

**250-Word Major Project/Paper Proposal Due Anytime This Week**

### March 10

**Spring Break**

*Sor'y, No Class*

### March 17

**Midterm Exam**

### March 24

**Plato’s Dialogs**

- Excerpts from “The Gorgias,” “The Phaedrus” and “The Protagoras” (Email)

### March 31

**Contemporary Receptions of Plato’s Dialogs**

- Black: “Plato’s View of Rhetoric” (Reader)
- Stewart: “The Continuing Relevance of Plato’s *Phaedrus*” (Reader)
- Kameen: “Author/ity in the Classroom: Questioning the Source” (Reader)

### April 7

**The Sophists and Sophistic Rhetoric**

- Gorgias: “The Encomium of Helen” and “On Being or On Nature” (Reader)
- “Selected Sophistic Fragments” (Reader)
- Consigny: “The Rhetoricity of Logos” (Reader)
- Katula and Murphy: “The Sophists and Rhetorical Consciousness” (Reader)
April 14

**Neo-Sophistic Rhetorical Theory**

- Poulakos: “Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric” (Reader)
- Leff: “Modern Sophistic and the Unity of Rhetoric” (Reader)
- McComiskey: “Neo-Sophistic Rhetorical Theory” (Reader)

**Major Project/Paper Due Anytime This Week**

April 21

**Neo-Sophistic Rhetorical Pedagogy**

- Jarratt: “Sophistic Pedagogy Then and Now” (Reader)
- Crowley: “A Plea for the Revival of Sophistry” (Reader)
- Jarratt: “Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict” (Reader)
- Lindblom: “Toward a Neo-Sophistic Writing Pedagogy” (Reader)

April 28

**Neo-Sophistic and Ethics**

- Katz: “The Ethics of Expediency: Classical Rhetoric, Technology, and the Holocaust” (Reader)
- Scott: “Sophistic Ethics in the Technical Writing Classroom: Teaching Nomos, Deliberation, and Action” (Reader)

**Last Day of Class**

- Course Evaluations
- Final Remarks

**Second Expanded Response & Weekly Responses Since 2/24 Due in Class**