

# COM 730: Theories of [Rhetorical] Communication

## General Class Information

### Course Overview

This course provides grounding in the dominant traditions of rhetorical thought, going back to its ancient roots, as well as a critical examination of how those traditions have evolved through to the present day. Both historical survey and close study of key concepts, themes, and problems, the course is designed to offer graduate students a broad yet nuanced introduction to the major strands of rhetorical thought. By the end of the semester, students ought to have a command of the main themes, key moments, dominant voices, recurrent issues, and constantly emerging variations that make up “the rhetorical tradition.”

### Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should be able to satisfy the following learning outcomes, as outlined by the Department of Communication Studies:

1. Define communication in a rhetorical context.
2. Identify and explain historical developments and key theories in rhetorical communication.
3. Explain and recognize self-reflexivity in rhetorical contexts.
4. Critically analyze and evaluate published research articles.
5. Explain and recognize multiple perspectives in rhetorical communication.
6. Explain and recognize ethical and unethical rhetorical communication.

### Required Texts

1. Bizzell and Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Bedford, 2001).
2. Barbara Warnick, *The Sixth Canon: Belletristic Rhetorical Theory and its French Antecedents* (Columbia: South Carolina UP, 1993).

\*\*\* Additional readings, as listed in the weekly schedule, will be available in Canvas. *Make sure to download, print, and bring these to class.*

## Assignments

1. Three 2 page (single spaced) **Critical Reaction Papers (30% [10% each])**. At least two must be handed in by mid-semester (October 21<sup>st</sup>). These papers will enable you to *narrow* on a particular issue, theme, or curiosity that arises from the week's readings. They are due, in class, the week following the day we discuss them.
2. Two **In-Class Reports (10%)**. You will select a day to provide useful background on a key figure, text, event or phenomenon of your choosing. The goal is to have students add contextual richness to the day's discussion. Hard copies of outlines are to be distributed the day of, and the presentations should be around 10 minutes.
3. **Midterm Exam** (take home) covering key themes from the readings (**15%**). The exam will be your opportunity to *synthesize a broader scope* of concepts and principles than the reaction papers allow. *Due: Friday October 18<sup>th</sup>, 5pm.*
4. 3-5 page **Final Paper Proposal**, including annotated bibliography of key readings (**10%**). This crucial assignment will initiate your research for the final project. You will review relevant rhetoric and communication journals in order to situate your project.
5. **Final Paper** of approximately 20 pages in which you engage a tension, ambiguity, contradiction, opening, or lack that arises from our course readings and discussion in class (**35%**).

## Reports

Two in-class reports are required of each student. Outlines, with bibliographies, are required for each report. They must be typewritten, in standard outline form, and include a list of all sources used in the report (at least five authoritative, credible outside sources). Feel free to add editorial notes, comments, questions, and asides to help the class follow your analysis. Please also provide a paper copy of the outline for the class at the time of the report.

The reports are intended to enrich our discussions of rhetorical theory by providing historical, contextual, and/or biographical information about important rhetorical concepts, figures or events. They should be approximately ten minutes in length. The aim should be to make our authors and texts "come alive" for the class. Outlines should include relevant historical and biographical information as well as comments, questions, reflections, provocations, etc., that help guide our reception of the information.

## Midterm Examination

There will be a take-home written midterm worth **15%** of the final course grade. Additional information on the examination will be provided in class. *The midterm is due in my office by 5pm on Friday October 18<sup>th</sup>*

## Critical Reaction Papers

Students will compose 3 two-page (single spaced, twelve point font, one inch margins) critical reaction papers devoted to a given day's assigned reading(s). Which reading(s), and hence which day(s), you select is entirely up to you. The one stipulation associated with the assignment is that you must submit your paper at the *beginning of the class immediately*

following the period during which we discuss the selected reading. Beyond this limitation, you are free to choose what you write about and when.

### **What is a Critical Reaction Paper?**

Begin by very briefly (one or two paragraphs) summarizing the reading. Be sure to incorporate the language of the original text as you convey its core ideas. A simple parenthetical page number following a quote or borrowed idea will suffice as a reference tool. *You must cite the reading whenever you borrow its language or ideas. Do not quote the lecture notes.* Most importantly, I am looking for *critical reactions*. Focus on a very specific issue in the reading and mull it over, push it around, interrogate it, extend it, etc. In particular, relate your reading to our other readings. *Make connections and disconnections* between concepts and authors. Find lines of relevance between arguments. Forge new links between ideas. Challenge and contest. I am primarily interested in your ability to *say something unique and productive* about your selected reading, and to convincingly develop your point of view.

### **Major Paper Assignment**

The paper will contribute **35%** to the final course grade. The final paper serves two main purposes: 1) it requires you to engage in detailed research and sustained inquiry on a particular set of conceptual issues; 2) it serves as the potential groundwork for a larger project, such as a conference presentation, journal publication, and/or thesis.

Because ours is a course in the history of rhetorical thought, the final papers ought to examine some dimension of theory *in terms of* something concrete. Please be clear: *we are not writing rhetorical criticism*, which means we are not “applying” theory to practice. We are instead examining, critiquing, re-interpreting, and ultimately *building upon* rhetorical concepts for the better understanding of social action.

Use either MLA (parenthetical or footnotes), 5<sup>th</sup> edition, or Chicago Style, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, for all papers. Proofread all writing carefully. I will return, *unread*, papers that do not conform to respectable standards of grammar, spelling, mechanics, and citation for graduate level work. Please do not enclose the final draft of your paper in a plastic or paper cover of any sort. Simply staple the pages together in the upper left-hand corner. Satisfactory completion of this assignment will require substantial reliance upon both primary and secondary sources.

### **Grading Scale**

A	=	93-100	C	=	73-76
A-	=	90-92	C-	=	70-72
B+	=	87-89	D+	=	67-69
B	=	83-86	D	=	63-66
B-	=	80-82	D-	=	60-62
C+	=	77-79	F	=	00-59

## Course Policies

### **Format**

The course will be conducted as a seminar, so please come each week ready to engage one another with questions, comments, fresh interpretations, reactions and provocations. Everyone will be expected to participate actively and regularly in class discussions. The best way to be prepared for this kind of interaction is to read the day's materials both "straight on" (for information) and "askew" (for alternative possibilities). Take lots of notes and be ready to share your views, questions, hypotheses, frustrations, and inspirations with your colleagues.

### **Absence Policy**

Class attendance is mandatory. Satisfactory performance is unlikely for students who accumulate absences. Insight gained from class discussion cannot be obtained through other sources. Thus, students are expected to be present and prepared for each and every class meeting.

### **Policy on Late Work**

Reports, papers, and exams must be completed and/or received on the dates specified in the class schedule. Only under the most extreme circumstances will modification of this policy be considered.

### **Policy on Academic Honesty**

All material submitted for course credit must be the original work of the student claiming credit for it. Students guilty of knowingly using, or attempting to use, another person's work as though that work were their own, and students guilty of knowingly permitting, or attempting to permit, another student to use their work, will receive a grade of "F" for the course. Such conduct may also constitute grounds for dismissal from the University. Students who are unfamiliar with the University's policy on plagiarism should consult the most recent edition of the UNLV Student Handbook.

## UNLV Policies

For a full list of UNLV policies updated by term [please click here](#). Specific policies are also noted below.

**Academic Misconduct**—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the

sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Classroom Conduct**—Students have a responsibility to conduct themselves in class and in the libraries in ways that do not interfere with the rights of other students to learn or of instructors to teach. Use of electronic devices such as pagers, cellular phones, or recording devices, or potentially disruptive devices or activities, are permitted only with the prior explicit consent of the instructor. The instructor may rescind permission at any time during class. If a student does not comply with established requirements or obstructs the functioning of the class, the instructor may initiate an administrative drop.

**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Missed Classwork**—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course

without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**Tutoring and Coaching**—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Library Resources**—Librarians are available to consult with students on research needs, including developing research topics, finding information, and evaluating sources. To make an appointment with a subject expert for this class, please visit the Libraries' Research Consultation website: <http://guides.library.unlv.edu/appointments/librarian>. You can also ask questions via chat and text message at <http://ask.library.unlv.edu/>.

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.

## Sample Course Schedule

- Aug. 26      **Introductions and Overview**  
 B&H, pp. 1609-1627 (Fish, "Rhetoric")  
*The Four Main Models of Rhetoric*
- ANCIENT RHETORICS
- Sept. 2      *Labor Day Recess*
- Sept. 9      **Conceptual Foundations**  
 B&H, pp. 19-39 ("Introduction"); (and pp. 1-16, *recommended*)  
 Schiappa, "The Development of Greek Rhetoric"  
 Conley, "Classical Greek Rhetorics"  
 Arendt, "The Public and the Private Realm"
- Report Topics:  
 - Corax & Tisias (origin story)  
 - Periclean Democracy (structures and culture)
- Sept. 16      **Sophistry**  
 B&H, pp. 42-46 ("Encomium of Helen"); 47-55 ("Dissoi Logoi")  
 Lysias, "On the Refusal of a Pension to the Invalid"  
 Poulakos, "Sophistical Rhetoric and Its Circumstances"  
 Jarratt, "Introduction" to Rereading the Sophists
- Report Topics:  
 - Protagoras (major figure)  
 - Sophistic Pedagogies
- Sept. 23      **Platonism**  
 B&H, pp. 80-168 ("Gorgias" and "Phaedrus," selections)  
 Vickers, "Plato's Attack on Rhetoric"
- Report Topics:  
 - Plato's major works (themes, issues)  
 - Socrates (influence on Plato)  
 - Idealism/Theory of Forms (relevance to rhetoric)
- Sept. 30      **Aristotelianism**  
 B&H, pp. 169-240 (On Rhetoric, selection)  
 Garver, "Aristotle's Rhetoric in Theory and Practice"  
 Hill, "Aristotle's Rhetorical Theory"

Report Topics:

- Aristotle's major works (where does rhetoric fit?)
- Topoi/commonplaces (function and importance)

- Oct. 7      **Isocrateanism/Ciceronianism**  
 B&H, pp. 67-79 ("Against the Sophists," and "Antidosis")  
 B&H, pp. 283-343 (De Oratore, selection)  
 B&H, pp. 359-428 (Institutes of Oratory, selection)  
 Jaeger, "The Rhetoric of Isocrates and Its Cultural Ideal"

Report Topics:

- Stasis Theory (details, function, reach)
- The Trivium (foundation of liberal arts tradition)
- St. Augustine (where to place and key ideas)

### **RENAISSANCE & EARLY MODERN RHETORICS**

- Oct. 14      **Platonism**  
 Ong, selections from Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue  
 B&H, pp. 674-697 ("Arguments Against Quintilian," selection)  
 Descartes, selection from Meditations on First Philosophy  
 Erasmus & Luther, "Debate Over Free Will"

Report Topics:

- The Reformation (knowledge-culture-politics)
- Natural Language (PortRoyalists)

\*\*\* Midterm Exam Due Friday 18<sup>th</sup> (15%) \*\*\*

- Oct. 21      **Sophistry**  
 B&H, pp. 791-812 ("Introduction"); 736-747 (Bacon); pp. 879-888 (Sheridan);  
 pp. 889-897 (Austin)  
 Lamy, selection from The Art of Speaking  
 Warnick, Chapter 1: "Lamy's *L'Art de parler* and the Eclipse of Invention"

Report Topics:

- Thomas Hobbes (social atomism)
- Elocution (the reach of style/delivery)
- Friedrich Nietzsche (godfather of postmodernism)

- Oct. 28      **Aristotelianism & Isocrateanism** (sort of)  
 B&H, pp. 898-946 (Campbell); pp. 947-979 (Blair)  
 Warnick, Chapter 4: "Taste"  
 Walzer, "Origins of British Enlightenment Rhetoric"

Report Topics:

- Taste theorists (Hume, Kant, Gerard, Reid)
- Kames, Elements of Criticism



**LATE MODERN/CONTEMPORARY RHETORICS**

- Aristotelianism**
- Nov. 4 B&H, pp. 1372-1409 (Perelman and O-Tyteca); 1410-1428 (Toulmin)  
Farrell, Norms of Rhetorical Culture, selection.
- Report Topics:  
- Edwin Black's Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method (what [not to] do with Aristotle)  
- Eugene Garver (neo-Aristotelian uptake)
- Nov. 11 *Veterans Day Recess*
- Isocrateanism**
- Nov. 18 B&H, pp. 1491-1519 (Booth)  
B&H, pp. 1295-1347 (Burke)  
Burke, "Definition of Man"
- Report Topics:  
- Wingspread Conference (legacy)  
- 1929-1968 (social changes)
- Platonism**
- Nov. 25 B&H, pp. 1361-71 ("The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric")  
Weaver, "The Spaciousness of Old Rhetoric"
- Report Topics:  
- Southern Agrarianism (social order)  
- Modern conservatism (key figures, themes)
- Sophistry**
- Dec. 2 B&H, pp. 1171-79 (Nietzsche, "Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense")  
Rorty, "The Contingency of Language"  
Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric"  
McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric"
- Report Topics:  
- Post-structuralism (knowledge and language)  
- Post-humanism (ethics, technology)
- Dec. 13 *Final Papers Due, in my office by 5pm (35%)*

## **Paper Grading Criteria**

### **“A” Paper**

- A clear, original thesis that synthesizes course material in a thoughtful and cogent manner.
- A clear organizational structure that is easy for the reader to follow and understand.
- The prose is clear, lucid, and fluid with few, if any, grammatical or spelling errors.
- Sources are clearly, accurately, and thoroughly cited without error.
- Main points are clearly stated and supported with relevant information.
- The analysis is thoughtful and fresh, offering productive insights and a firm grasp of the research.
- The conclusions are clear and push our understanding of the material further.
- Contains an accurate bibliography.
- Meets all formatting requirements.
- Adheres to assignment topic closely.

### **“B” Paper**

- Thesis is present but may not be clear, or easily identified by the reader.
- Organization structure is somewhat easy to follow, but is not consistent throughout the paper.
- Most points have evidentiary support, but not all, and evidence may appear without something to support.
- There are some grammatical and spelling errors throughout the manuscript.
- Citations are incomplete and/or inconsistent in some places.
- Analysis contains some logical gaps.
- Does not contain a fully realized conclusion.
- Contains an accurate bibliography.
- Meets all formatting requirements.
- Adheres to assignment topic in almost every way.

### **“C” Paper**

- Thesis is difficult to find, or is a simple restatement of an obvious point.
- Organization is difficult to follow, and transitions are unclear.
- Most points lack evidentiary support and often times evidence appears without something to support.
- There are several grammatical and spelling errors throughout.
- Citations are incomplete and/or inconsistent.
- Analysis is only semi-coherent, lacking examples.
- Barely any conclusion.
- Bibliography incomplete and/or incorrect.
- Meets all formatting requirements.
- Adheres to assignment topic.

**“D” Paper**

- Minimal effort with no clear thesis or argument.
- No discernible organization.
- Almost all points lacking support.
- Many grammatical and spelling errors.
- No discernible conclusion.
- Sources are incorrectly cited.
- Bibliography is absent or incomplete and/or erroneous.
- Meets all formatting requirements.
- Minimal adherence to assignment topic.

**“F” Paper**

- Minimal effort lacking any thesis or main point.
- Disorganized and/or incoherent.
- Almost all points lacking support.
- Riddled with grammatical and spelling errors.
- No conclusion.
- Sources absent or incorrectly cited.
- Bibliography is absent or incomplete and/or erroneous.
- Does not meet all formatting requirements.
- Does not adhere to assignment topic.