

COM K198: Democracy & Discourse

Fall 2012

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 11-12pm, 2-3pm & by appointment.

Description of the Course:

Prerequisite: ENG K101.*

This course will explore the connections between oral, written, and visual discourse within the context of social and political movements in American history. Emphasis will be placed on the history of civil discourse in America and the theoretical underpinnings of rhetoric, argument and persuasion. Finally, this course will track and analyze contemporary debates and campaigns related to major political elections and social movements.

COM K173 Course Outcome:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of American rhetorical discourse from colonial times to the modern era.
2. Discuss and compare different theories of rhetoric, argument, and persuasion.
3. Analyze the uses of information in an active democracy.
4. Research, analyze, and evaluate a contemporary issue and/or campaign in American rhetorical discourse.

Required Materials:

Public Discourse in America: Conversation and Community in the Twenty-First Century, Edited by Judith Rodin and Stephen P. Steinberg

All other readings will be posted on BlackBoard in PDF format. You should expect to read about 40-60 pages a week. Some of the reading will be difficult and will thus require you to work through them - this type of "patient reading" takes work, so be prepared to mark the text and take notes when you read. Please bring your notes, thoughts and questions to class for discussion.

Email and Office Hours:

If you have any questions or want to discuss a particular reading or assignment, feel free to contact me or drop by my office to chat. I am on campus five days a week, but my office hours are times set aside for the express purpose of speaking

with you about your educational concerns. If you would like to meet at a time other than my posted office hours, contact me (in person, via email, or via phone) to arrange an appointment. Please email me with any questions or concerns that may arise through the course of the semester. I will respond to emails within 24-36 hours. If you send an email between late Friday and Sunday, I will respond beginning the following Monday. You can also call me on my office phone.

Assignments:

- Participation (10%)
- Classwork/Homework (10%)
- Group Project (10%)
- Essays (30%)
- Final Research Project (40%)

Attendance and Preparation:

This is a class that requires your regular and engaged attendance. While there is no explicit attendance policy, it is important to be present and to be “present.” There will be required reading for virtually every class, and it is expected that you have spent sufficient time working through the reading. Also, we will be analyzing many political speeches and documents, and you should expect to take a slow and methodical approach to this type of reading and analysis. Much of this class will be conducted in a seminar fashion, meaning we will all sit down collectively to discuss, analyze, interrogate, and cordially debate potential meanings of any given text. Our approach to this process will assume that all meaning is contingent, and this nature of contingency means that we should give the proper time and consideration to each other’s ideas. However, this does not mean that we have to agree. This process requires meaningful preparation by each participant in order to be productive.

Late Assignments and Make-up Policy:

Late assignments will not be accepted except in the most dire of circumstances. You are expected to attend class on the day you have assignments due. The only exceptions to this will be documented cases of extreme illness, death of a family member, or college or legal obligations. You will be expected to contact me within twenty-four hours of the class meeting and should return to class with the documentation. Even with documentation, you are not guaranteed the opportunity to make-up the missed assignment, and if you are, may do so with a grade penalty. If you are not able to make class when an assignment is due, I will request a digital copy be emailed to me before our assigned class meeting time. When you return, you should bring documentation for your absence as well as a hard copy of the assignment. I do not permit make-ups for in-class assignments.

Academic Integrity and Ethics:

The decision to enter college and undertake advanced study is a choice that entails an important set of ethical commitments. One of these commitments is a mindfulness of plagiarism: knowing what it is and how to properly complete assignments competently and ethically. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any assignment found to be plagiarized or to come from plagiarized material will receive a grade of zero and the student will be reported to the Academic Dean and Student Services Dean where disciplinary action may be taken.

Students with Disabilities:

Any person who because of a disability may need special arrangements or accommodations to meet the requirements of this course should consult with me as soon as possible in order to arrange an appropriate plan of action for this semester.

Class Cancellation Policy:

In the event that I am not able to attend class, you should find a note posted outside our classroom door. If there is no note but I am not in the classroom, please wait ten minutes before concluding that class has been cancelled. In the event of cancellation, I will make every effort to notify you by email ahead of time. For instructions on class cancellation due to inclement weather, please consult your student handbook, which can be accessed online through the TRCC website.

COM K198: Fall 2012 Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. If there are any changes, you will be notified in class.

Date	Topic	Reading
Week 1 (Aug 29 - Sep 1)	Introduction to Rhetoric and the "Problem" of Democratic Discourse	<u>Public Discourse</u> "Prologue" and "Introduction"
Week 2 (Sep 4 - 7)	The Puritans and Early Colonies	<u>Public Discourse</u> Part 1 - "Public Discourse and Democracy"
Week 3 (Sep 10 - 14)	Revolutionary America	Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument" Habermas, "The Public Sphere" *Essay 1 due on 9/13
Week 4 (Sep 17 - 21)	Constitutional Strife <i>Sep. 17 - Constitution Day</i>	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 8 Brockriede and Ehninger, "Toulmin on Argument"
Week 5 (Sep 24 - 28)	Democracy in the Early Republic	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 14 Brockriede, "Where is Argument?" *Essay 2 due on 9/27
Week 6 (Oct 1 - 5)	Sectionalism and Civil War <i>Oct. 3rd - Pres. Debate on domestic policy</i>	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 15 Farrell, "Validity and Rationality" Pocock, "Verbalizing a Political Act"
Week 7 (Oct 8 - 12)	Post-Civil War America <i>Oct. 11th - VP Debate on foreign & domestic policy</i>	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapters 4 & 12 *Essay 3 due on 10/11
Week 8 (Oct 15 - 19)	Industrialization, Economic Justice and Progressive Change <i>Oct. 16 - Pres. Town Hall on foreign and domestic policy</i>	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 13 Burke, "Terministic Screens"
Week 9 (Oct 22 - 26)	The Making of an Empire <i>Oct. 22 - Pres. Debate on foreign policy</i>	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 9 Booth, "The Scope of Rhetoric Today"
Week 10 (Oct 29 - Nov 2)	World War II Group Project Presentations	Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle'" *Group Projects due on 11/1
Week 11 (Nov 5 - 9)	The Cold War and American Power	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 10

	<i>Nov. 6 – Election Day</i>	
Week 12 (Nov 12 -16)	Civil and Human Rights	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 7 Butler, “The Value of Being Disturbed” Nancy, “Listening” *Research Proposals due on 11/15
Week 13 (Nov 19 -23)	*No class on 11/22 for Thanksgiving	Bryant, “Rhetoric: Its Functions and Its Scopes”
Week 14 (Nov 26 -30)	The Role of Government in the Economy	Black, “The Second Persona” Blumenberg, “The Anthropological Significance of Rhetoric”
Week 15 (Dec 3 - 7)	9/11 and the War on Terror	<u>Public Discourse</u> Chapter 18, 21, and Epilogue Murphy, “Our Mission and Our Moment”
Week 16 (Dec 10 - 14)	Research Project Presentations	*Research Essays due on 12/13