

Vesalius College

Course description

Course title: Rhetoric

Course code: CMM 231E

Teacher responsible: Claude Bernard, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Communication

Course description:

This course will give students the opportunity to become familiar with rhetorical theories and devices as well as the study of persuasion from a historical perspective, namely from ancient Greece and Rome to contemporary rhetors while also focussing on Christian rhetoric.

These theories will be used to analyse persuasive messages of all types – from public speeches and conversations to political propaganda. This, in turn, will allow for the study and analysis of the societal implications of such persuasive messages.

The course will take the form of a series of lectures; students are therefore encouraged to take as many notes as possible during the class and supplement the lectures with personal reading and research. A number of films and documentaries dealing with rhetoric during World War II will be shown and discussed in class.

Typically, one of the two weekly sessions will focus on the history of rhetoric while the other will be more practical in nature (presentations, speeches, debates, rebuttals...). A mock trial will also be staged from start to finish. Skills for writing and delivering argumentative essays or speeches will also be fine-tuned via a series of systematic exercises.

Course objectives:

This course builds on the knowledge acquired in the former Public Speaking course now replaced by the 100- level Human Communication class. By studying rhetorical forms through the ages and by analysing a great number of speeches from a variety of sources – from Ancient Greece to contemporary propaganda and political rhetoric, students will be given ample opportunity to fine-tune their rhetorical skills by delivering speeches, analysing outstanding speeches from plays and actual occurrences. Another objective is to learn how to respond to constructive criticism. By participating in a mock trial based on actual events, students will have the opportunity to develop a legal strategy and learn how to adapt it in response to the arguments put forward by the opposing legal team. It will force them to “think on their feet” and respond for maximum effect. By the end of the course, the students will be acquainted with a number of techniques that will prove useful in building and presenting a point of view. Students will become more familiar with a substantial number of true as well as false rhetorical techniques and procedures.

Grade weighting scheme:

Rhetorical exercises:	20 percent
Mid term exam:	20 percent
Book report/ discussion (Utopia)	20 percent
Written assignment	20 percent
Final exam:	20 percent

Used course material (handbooks, readers, readings, newspapers, magazines) and references:

*Aristotle's *Rhetoric*

*Choice of a philosophical/political/literary/entrepreneurial book dealing with the theme of Utopia (Plato's *Republic* for instance) a full list of which will be provided in class.

*Chapters from books will be distributed as well.

*A Rulebook of Argument.