Course Syllabus

CODE number : CMM371G

RHETORIC

Number of ECTS: 6

Contact details:
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Course prerequisites (if any):
CMM 101, BUS101P or POL101P

Course Description

Students attending this course will come to understand how rhetorical theory and its practical implications have been critical components of effective communication through the ages.

By studying the building blocks of rhetoric as first codified by ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians and by progressively gaining an understanding of its contemporary forms from a political, theological and a legal perspective, students will be equipped to analyze various forms of persuasive messages. These run the gamut from public speeches to various forms of consumer-driven persuasive messages and political propaganda.
Thus, in turn, will give participants the opportunity to study and assess the societal implications of such persuasive messages. Finally, the course will also focus on the critical importance of the ethical dimension of rhetoric.
Learning Objectives

The Broad Learning Outcomes of the course

1. To acquire knowledge of Communications Studies as a science and understand and compare academic literature of different fields of Communication Studies (human, mass, organisational, intercultural, political and business communication, journalism studies, strategic communication and media production, research and development).
2. To promote the understanding and critical reflection of occupational, regulatory, ethical, technological, political, economic, and cultural factors in communication and different media industries, and be able to assess their impact.
3. To know and be able to apply the main social science research methods in the design and execution of communication projects independently or in a team.
4. To be able to gain insight into the functioning of the communication processes of governments and media companies.
5. To be highly skilled in oral and written communication and be able to address diverse audiences.
6. To understand the transnational aspect of the communication industry and the propaganda machinery.
7. To be prepared to pursue a Master’s degree in all the different fields of Communications Studies. Get stimulated to lifelong learning and/or attain a high-level occupation in a relevant field.

These learning outcomes are in line with the following Discipline Learning Outcomes for the Bachelor in Communications Sciences as ratified by the NVAO: DLO2, DLO7, DLO8, DLO9 and DLO11

The Specific Learning Outcomes of the course

Acquired Knowledge:

- By the end of the course students will become familiar with the theories, issues and problems related to the function of persuasive arguments and messages as delivered in speeches and via modern news media outlets.
- Have a solid grasp of the history and study of persuasion and rhetorical theories from classical Greece to the present.
- Fully acknowledge the ethical dimension and responsibility of political and media practitioners when delivering a message (speech or mediated).
Applying Knowledge:

- Analyze a superior speech from both a linguistic, structural and rhetorical perspective;
- Undertake in depth analysis and written evaluation/criticism of their own work and the work of other students in class
- Undertake comparative analysis
- Have a solid understanding of the design, execution and presentation of research
- Develop persuasive arguments across various communications/media channels
- Understand and assess the social and political impact of rhetoric
- Understand and appreciate the various shades of propaganda as applied from WWII to the present day
- Gain an appreciation for and a deeper understanding of the function of rhetoric in various fields, including advertising, politics, law and theology.

Judgment:

- Compose a comprehensive research paper drawn from various sources into a cohesive whole
- Active participation in debates and discussions
- Draft a minimum 15 page research paper based on a list of topics and relying on carefully selected primary and secondary sources (to be discussed with the professor during office hours)
- Develop a clear ability to employ rhetorical strategies effectively in both written and oral assignments.

Communication:

- Advance, defend, argue informed opinion on a delicate/controversial topic
- Engage in a structured debate with a fellow student or with respect to a group

Attitudes:

- Develop leadership skills
- Develop a professional attitude throughout the semester by showcasing the attitudes that are compatible with a future working/internship environment, including dependability, promptness and initiative
- To be eager to apply life-long learning skills
- Develop confidence in one’s level of competence and performance
- Ability to acknowledge that a different point of view might be perfectly defensible
- Be open and able to work in a large group dynamic whenever necessary
COURSE CALENDAR

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CALENDAR IS TENTATIVE

The pedagogical approach and methodology are highly dependent on the response of the students regarding the various issues discussed in class. Furthermore, to ensure the highest possible degree of topicality, suitable social/legal/politically-driven events will be incorporated at the discretion of the professor.

WEEK 1 Distribution of the syllabus and general introduction to rhetoric. Questionnaire and discussion. Understanding the vital importance of the art and craft of rhetoric in Ancient Greece and Rome and in a contemporary setting.

WEEK 2 Plato’s Moral-Philosophical view on rhetoric.
Plato’s dialogues and definitions of true and false rhetoric.

WEEK 3 The Scientific Approach of Aristotle.
In-class rhetorical exercises. Preparation for in-class mock trial.
Individual oral presentations focusing on superior speeches (15-20 minutes per student).

WEEK 4 Roman rhetoric: Cicero and Quintilian (1)
Review chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the reference book
Individual oral presentations.

WEEK 5 Roman rhetoric: Cicero and Quintilian (II)
Oral presentations.
Review chapter 4 from reference book.

WEEK 6 In-class mock trial and discussion. Oral presentations.

WEEK 7 Mid-Term Exam
The closed book exam will cover the material seen in class.
Oral presentations (last week) and book reports.

WEEK 8 The Christianization of rhetoric (i)
Brief history of Judeo-Christian mores and traditions.
Understanding parables in their social/political/theological context.
Book reports.

WEEK 9 The Christianization of rhetoric (ii)
Chiastic forms in scriptures.
Book report.
WEEK 10  Rhetoric and propaganda. A study of persuasion in Nazi Germany (film + documentary)  
Resistance movements in time of propaganda. The force and limits of reason in times of totalitarianism  
Book report (last week).

WEEK 11  Propaganda and resistance movements (II)  
Presentation and discussion of research papers

WEEK 12  Presentation and discussion of research papers (II)

WEEK 13  The Utopia Project – individual book report and group presentation of an original utopian model

WEEK 14  Test on the reference book (material seen after week 6).  
Preparation for final exam.

WEEK 15  FINAL EXAM (including a 2-page paper on a topic to be discussed)

Course Materials

Textbook:  
Title: The Essential Guide to Rhetoric by William Keith and Christian Lundberg  
Publisher: Bedford/ St Martin’s  
Year:2008

Case Studies and Suggested Additional Readings:  
The Righteous Mind by Jonathan Haidt  
Publisher: Penguin Edition  
Year: 2012

Persuasion, the Art to Influencing People by James Borg  
Publisher: Person Prentice Hall  
Year: 2008

You are Talking to Me? By Sam Leitch  
Publisher: Profile Books  
Year: 2011

Rhetorical analysis – A Brief Guide for Writers by Mark G. Longaber and Jeffrey Walker  
Publisher: Longman  
Year: 2010
Select a book (essay, novel or treatise) on the subject of Utopia. List to be distributed and discussed in class.

A number of relevant articles and chapters will be provided in class

Videos:

A number of videos, films and documentaries will be watched (inside or outside class) and debated during the course;

Course support site: PointCarré

Course materials (syllabus, support materials, important messages, etc) will be uploaded on the Vesalius website, Pointcarré. Students are expected to visit the site regularly to keep abreast of course changes and evolutions.

Course Assessment
The students will be evaluated on the basis of their performance as follows:

- Presentation 5%
- Book Report 15%
- Paper (Propaganda) 20%
- Mid-term examination 20%
- The Utopia project 10%
- Final examination 30%
TOTAL: 100%

The time allocation is estimated as follows:
- Research paper: 45 hours
- Presentations: 10 hours
- Mid-term Exam: 30 hours
- Final exam: 30 hours
- In-class participation 45 hours
Grading Scale of Vesalius College

Vesalius College grading policy, in line with the Flemish Educational norms, is now as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>Scale of 20</th>
<th>Scale of 100</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17.0-20.0</td>
<td>85-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>16.1-16.9</td>
<td>81-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>15.3-16.0</td>
<td>77-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>14.5-15.2</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>13.7-14.4</td>
<td>69-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>13.1-13.6</td>
<td>66-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>12.3-13.0</td>
<td>62-65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>11.5-12.2</td>
<td>58-61</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>10.7-11.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>10.0-10.6</td>
<td>50-53</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-9.9</td>
<td>0-49</td>
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Assessment Criteria

A grade of A: Demonstrates outstanding competence. The work reflects a breadth of reading and is based on ample use of sources and displays vigorous analytical capacities; the central ideas are original and distinctive, substantially developed and supported with details and illustrations. The paper is logically organized and displays careful language use: complete, clear and engaging sentences, correct and distinctive diction. There are NO errors in Standard English usage.

A grade of B: Demonstrates good competence. The central idea or ideas are original and clear; the writer shows that there is a point to be made. The central idea or ideas are developed and supported with argumentation. The work demonstrates that the student has covered the basic reading and displays good comprehension. The selection and the use of sources is adequate. The research outcomes and arguments are presented in proper academic form.

A grade of C: The work displays a working ability to assemble bibliography and to use resources adequately; reasonable understanding of the core literature and an ability to attempt a scholarly interpretation and analysis of the material read, even if the analysis is incomplete. The work is be presented in a proper academic form, even if there are some flaws in the written or oral expression.

A grade of D: The work displays limited reading and incomplete knowledge, flaws in the understanding, inadequate interpretation, limited argumentation. It is presented in adequate English, but with considerable flaws in academic expression.
A grade of F: An overall mark below D indicates that not even the minimal standards defined above have been attained.

The Communication Department assesses the outcome of student learning using variety of indicators. Generally the following principles prevail in evaluating written and oral work:

a) Written work
   All written work must be provided in a hard copy version and must conform to the academic standards of research and writing (the Writing Center provides information and guidance on this). The following aspects are taken into consideration when assessing students’ written work:
   o Correct and relevant knowledge of the field.
   o Understanding the issues involved (expressed in vigorous analysis).
   o Academic writing. This includes correct use of terminology.
   o Selection of relevant sources.
   o Formulation of thesis statement.
   o The ability to use evidence – to build arguments on the basis of the sources the students have accessed.
   o The ability to discriminate between the significant and the trivial.
   o Ability to develop a consistent argument.
   o Logical organization of material and a clear structure of the paper.
   o Independent thought: the students’ ability to assess critically the material they have used and formulate how their own position on the subject of their research.
   o The quality of writing: the ability to express oneself clearly and consistently, and to write fluently.

b) Oral presentations and in-class discussions
   o Correct and relevant knowledge of the field.
   o Understanding of issues involved.
   o Correct use of terminology.
   o Selection of relevant sources.
   o Formulation of position (thesis statement)
   o The ability to use evidence – to build arguments on the basis of the sources the students have accessed.
   o The ability to discriminate between the significant and the trivial.
   o Ability to develop a consistent argument.
   o Logical organization and clear structure of the argument.
   o Independent thought: students’ ability to assess critically the material they have used and formulate their own position on the subject of the research.
   o Eloquence : the ability to express oneself clearly, consistently and fluently.
The following criteria will also be applied in assessing your oral work: Evaluations and feedback provided by students (peer evaluations).

**Additional Course Policies**

**Teaching and Learning Methods, Presentations and Research Paper Instructions**

Teaching Method: Interactive professor lectures, expert lectures, videos, films, documentaries, class discussions, debates and mock trials;

Attendance and active participation is a must. Students are expected to attend all classes on time, actively participate and take copious notes. Failure to actively participate will result in severe repercussions grade–wise. In this case, participation means contributing significantly and intelligently to class discussions.

As a general rule and on account of the vital importance of timeliness expected for all communications professionals and barring exceptional and justifiable circumstances, late assignments will not be accepted.

It is imperative that future CMM practitioners learn to work and operate effectively within predetermined deadlines and it is therefore of crucial importance that students follow instructions carefully with regards to the various due dates (papers, presentations, debates, group projects, book reports). It is also expected that students understand that they need to develop and nurture a professional attitude. The course is lecture-driven and structured in such a way as to ensure that throughout the semester participants make progressive and incremental use of the rhetorical building blocks presented and categorized throughout the ages. The nature of the assignments also requires that students be present in class in order to fully participate in the various role-playing exercises, hence they need to make it a point not only to be present in class but to actively participate throughout the various course sessions.

The first oral presentation by students is worth 10% of the final grade and will focus exclusively on seminal speeches given by statesmen, intellectuals or other notable figures. It typically entails that students provide 1) the socio-political and historical context of the selected speech, 2) deliver it in an effective manner, 3) comment on the issues raised and on its pertinence and efficacy and 4) list all the rhetorical devices used throughout the speech to increase its effectiveness.

Students will write a comprehensive paper worth 20% of the final grade on propaganda or other rhetoric–related topics. The nature of the assignment is such that it will demand that students also include photos, posters and captions in their paper. The findings of the research paper will be discussed in a round
table format on week 11 and 12. The full list of topics will be provided and discussed in class beforehand.

Length: The extent of the paper, as is customary for any 300 level course, should be minimum 5000 and maximum 6000 words. Students are expected to use a minimum of 15 different academic or legitimate media-driven sources. MLA or Harvard style is required (to be discussed)

Research Methods: During this course students could familiarize themselves specifically with the following research methods: Content Analysis, Surveys, Focus Groups and In-depth interviews.

Presentation and Defense of Research Paper:
Students are naturally expected to summarize the main points of the research but also to do much additional investigations into the subject/topic assigned. Students need to present the information to the rest of the class in the clearest and most effective way possible and are expected to make use of Power Point as well as audiovisual material whenever possible. Additionally, the presenters or the group need to engage the class in discussion of the issues presented as well as defend his/her/their conclusions. A solid presentation demands insight, effort and professionalism.

Mid-Term and Final Exams
The mid-term and final exams will cover the lectures, presentations, reports, the specialized vocabulary and the assigned readings.

Academic Honesty Statement
Academic dishonesty is NOT tolerated in this course.

Academic honesty is not only an ethical issue but also the foundation of scholarship. Cheating and plagiarism are therefore serious breaches of academic integrity.

Following the College policy, cheating and plagiarism cases will be communicated in writing to the Associate Dean for Students and submitted to the Student Conduct Committee for disciplinary action.

If you refer to someone else's work, appropriate references and citations must be provided. Grammar, spelling and punctuation count, so use the tools necessary to correct before handing in assignments.