

Rhetoric Studies

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Rhetoric is the use of symbolic action by human beings to share ideas, enabling them to work together or make decisions about matters of common concern and to construct social reality. As such, rhetoric studies examines public advocacy and social expression by exploring influential speeches, Internet posts, popular culture, media representations, written documents, revolutionary movements, and the many other ways society engages in persuasive arguments and social discourse. Courses focus on political, environmental, social, activist, identity politics, and cultural argument while providing a solid grounding in the theory, practice, and criticism of contemporary communication. Students ultimately utilize this rhetorical understanding in studying the kinds of communication in which they have interest. In the process, they learn what makes rhetoric effective as well as how it affects their and others' lives.

Distribution: Courses completed in rhetoric apply to the humanities distribution area with the following exceptions:

Fine arts: 110

Cultural pluralism or humanities: 250 and 270

Activity credit/no distribution: 121, 221, and 222

Learning Goals: Upon graduation, a student will be able to:

- **Describe the discipline of rhetoric and its central questions.**
 - Explain the origins of rhetorical studies
 - Summarize the broad nature of the field of rhetoric
 - Analyze the importance of rhetorical expertise for civic engagement
 - Examine contemporary debates within the field of rhetorical studies
 - Distinguish the field of rhetorical studies from related areas of study
 - Identify intellectual specialization(s) in the discipline of rhetoric
- **Employ rhetorical theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts.**
 - Explain, synthesize, apply, and critique rhetorical studies theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts
- **Engage in rhetorical inquiry.**
 - Evaluate and apply scholarship in rhetorical studies
 - Formulate questions appropriate for rhetorical studies scholarship
 - Engage in scholarship within rhetorical studies using the research traditions of the discipline
 - Differentiate between various approaches to rhetoric
 - Contribute to scholarly conversations appropriate to the purpose of inquiry
 - Develop a theoretical fluency and agility to be used in applying rhetorical lenses to public, literary, and civic discourses
- **Create messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context.**
 - Locate and understand information relevant to communicative goals, audiences, purposes, and contexts
 - Select creative and appropriate modalities and technologies to accomplish communicative goals
 - Adapt rhetoric to the diverse needs of individuals, groups, and contexts
 - Present messages in multiple communication modalities and contexts
 - Adjust messages while in the processing of communicating
 - Critically reflect on one's own messages before, during, and after rhetorical exchanges and communicative events
- **Critically analyze messages.**
 - Identify meaning(s) embedded in messages
 - Analyze characteristics of mediated and non-mediated rhetoric
 - Recognize the influence of rhetoric
 - Engage in active listening
 - Enact mindful responses to discourse

- **Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals.**
 - Identify contexts, situations, and barriers that impede rhetorical self-efficacy
 - Perform verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors that illustrate self-efficacy
 - Articulate personal beliefs about abilities to accomplish rhetorical and communicative goals
 - Evaluate personal communication and self-created discourse's strengths and weaknesses
- **Apply ethical rhetorical principles and practices.**
 - Identify ethical perspectives
 - Explain the relevance of various ethical perspectives
 - Articulate the ethical dimensions of discourse
 - Evaluate ethics in relation to discourse and rhetorical situations
- **Utilize rhetoric to embrace difference**
 - Articulate the connection between discourse and culture
 - Recognize and appreciate individual and cultural difference
 - Respect diverse perspectives and the ways they influence public discourse
 - Articulate one's own perspective and how it affects public discourse
- **Influence Public Discourse.**
 - Explain the importance of rhetoric in civic life
 - Identify challenges facing communities and analyze the role of rhetoric in explicating and confronting those challenges
 - Evaluate rhetoric at local, national, and global levels
 - Advocate, empower, and utilize rhetorical perspectives to draw conclusions about discourse and civic life

The Rhetoric Studies major: A student who enters Whitman without any prior college-level coursework in rhetoric studies will complete 34 credits to fulfill the requirements for this major, including 230, 330, 387, 487, and 491 or 498, with up to 8 credits of 200 level or higher courses outside the department relevant to the student's rhetorical studies that are pre-approved by the student's major adviser. Students are welcome to concentrate their studies in areas such as political rhetoric, social justice rhetoric, legal rhetoric, discourse and rhetoric theory, or any area in which they have rhetorical interest.

- I. All majors will complete 230 by the end of fall junior year and 330 by the end of spring senior year.
- II. Junior and Senior Seminars: All majors will complete the 387 course in the spring semester of their junior year and the 487 course in the fall semester of their senior year.
- III. Senior Thesis: All majors will complete either the 491 or 498 course and orally defend a thesis as part of the 491 or 498 course during the fall semester of their senior year.
- IV. Students may not count more than 4 credits of Rhetoric Studies 121, 221, or 222 toward the major.
- V. Department policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the major.

The Rhetoric Studies minor: A minimum of 20 credits including: Rhetoric Studies 230 and at least four credits of 300-level or higher coursework. Up to four credits of 200 level coursework or higher outside of the department, fitting to the student's rhetorical studies and approved by the student's minor adviser, may count toward the minor. Students may not count more than four credits of Rhetoric 121, 221, or 222 toward the minor. Department policy does not allow a P-D-F grade option for courses within the minor.

The following courses are available for the Rhetoric Studies major or minor:

Race and Ethnic Studies 305 Continental Philosophy, Postcolonial Theory, and the Palestinian Question

Classics 139 Greek and Roman Intellectual History

100-103 Special Topics in Rhetoric Studies

1-4 credits

Courses in special topics areas within rhetorical studies. Any current offerings follow.

110 Fundamentals of Public Address

Fall, Spring

Patia

4 credits

Speech is one of our primary means of communication. This course provides training in the fundamentals of effective speaking including the preparation, presentation and evaluation of a variety of types of communication.

Preparation emphasizes the use of clear organization, cogent arguments, and strong and interesting supporting material. Presentation focuses on the use of vocal variety, distinct articulation, presence, gestures, and effective use of oral language. Evaluation encourages students to critique public address, learning to think and express what could make a presentation more effective. Oral presentations and several papers required.

121 Fundamentals of Argumentation and Debate

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

This course is an introduction to debate and argumentation. Argumentation is a fundamental process and skill in the field of Rhetoric as well as an indispensable part of who we are, why we change, and how we interact with each other. We will start there and move forward through the concept of argumentation, a move that requires practice and implementation in the form of actual debates. This course builds on critical thinking skills and adds a number of tools to the study of argumentation and debate. The critical thinking learning outcomes include the ability to create arguments and to evaluate the arguments of others. Assignments include: presenting an article about a theoretical premise in argumentation, working through the construction of a resolution with a fair division of ground, and participating in at least three in-class debates--one as the advocate, one as the critic, and one as the adjudicator. Participation in an intercollegiate debate tournament or the on-campus debate tournament will be an available option for students in this course, but will not be required. May not be taken P-D-F.

130 The Origins of Citizenship

Spring

T. Davis

4 credits

In the final year of his presidency, Barack Obama engaged in a series of speeches meant to highlight the critical role of citizenship in a democracy. He turned to this emphasis because he understood that the very idea of the citizen is now in crisis. But can we understand the depth and nature of this crisis without first considering the way citizenship in a democracy first arose? This course will trace the origin of democratic citizenship in Athens beginning with the Athenian led victory over the Persian Empire at Marathon through the creation of an unprecedented configuration of institutions, such as the educational space of the Theater of Dionysus and the participatory democracy of the Assembly, rooted in the power of speech as action. This emphasis on speech began in Homer and the tragic poets before ushering in a revolution with the Sophists and Socrates that itself contributes to the crisis of the Peloponnesian War with oligarchic Sparta that ends in Athens' complete defeat. We will follow out the Athenian creation of citizenship and its fate through selections from work by Homer, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Thucydides, Gorgias, Plato, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Paul Woodruff's *First Democracy* in addition to critical considerations raised by other contemporary theorists.

200-203 Special Topics in Rhetoric Studies

1-4 credits

Courses in special topics areas within rhetorical studies. Any current offerings follow.

221 Intercollegiate Parliamentary Debate and Speaking Events

Not offered 2018-19

2 credits

Participation in parliamentary debate and a speaking event throughout the semester. Students are expected to attend a preparation session the week before school begins (exceptions on a case-by-case basis only). Students are expected to attend meetings, prepare for parliamentary debate and a speaking event, practice each week with staff, and assist in the management of tournaments that Whitman hosts. Students must compete at two tournaments during the semester in parliamentary debate and in one speaking event when offered. Students may not jointly register for Rhetoric Studies 121, 221, 222. Rhetoric Studies 121 is not a prerequisite. May not be taken P-D-F.

222 Intercollegiate Policy Debate*

Not offered 2018-19

2 credits

Participation in policy debate throughout the semester. Students are expected to attend a preparation session the week before school begins (exceptions on a case-by-case basis only). Students are expected to attend meetings, prepare research assignments, engage in practice drills and debates, and assist in the management of tournaments

that Whitman hosts. Students must compete in debate at a minimum of two tournaments during the semester. Students may not jointly register for Rhetoric Studies 121, 221, 222. *Topics change yearly. Rhetoric Studies 121 is not a prerequisite. May not be taken P-D-F.

230 Introduction to Rhetoric and Public Culture

Fall, Spring

Fall: Bost; Spring: Bost

4 credits

An introduction to the Rhetoric Department, this course examines the role of communication in our contemporary society. We address three core areas: political and legal rhetoric, rhetorics of social justice, and contemporary rhetorical theory. Students evaluate public discourse such as political speeches (from across world regions), print and digital media (e.g., news, documentaries, web campaigns), and institutional advocacy (e.g., propaganda, legal arguments, and policy deliberations). Course requirements include class discussion, an oral presentation, and two short writing assignments. Throughout, students develop two key proficiencies: how to better interpret the diverse communication that surrounds them, and how to become effective and reflective advocates for change in the world.

250 Rhetoric, Gender and Sexuality

Fall

Patia

4 credits

This class examines the ways that rhetorical practices and theories rooted in gender and sexuality can and do create, reinforce, adjust and sometimes overcome sex and gender based bias in society. The nature of this bias is addressed as a rhetorical construct that continues to serve as a basis for social, political, and economic conditions of existence for many. In the class, we will critique communication in the media, daily discourse, the law, politics, and in personal experiences. The goal of this examination is to increase awareness of difference and bias in communication based on gender and sexuality, to challenge theoretical assumptions about what constitutes inequity, to analyze the rhetorical practices that constitute gender and sexuality, and to offer new perspectives from which to view gender-based rhetorical practices. May be elected as Gender Studies 250.

255 The Rhetoric of Social Protest

Spring

Patia

4 credits

This class explores the rhetorical grounds of social interaction with an emphasis on the role of communication in social change. The course introduces students to the primary theoretical tools that rhetorical studies uses to examine social protest and change. Theories are illustrated through examination of a set of case studies (e.g., civil rights campaigns, environmental politics, grass-roots social movements, and digitally networked global communities). By studying the phenomenon of social protest and change, we examine how collective identification is created and how groups are motivated to act in concert, particularly in contexts where communication alone may be insufficient to alleviate injustice.

260 Rhetoric and Sensation in Civic Life

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

For much of rhetoric's history, scholars have focused on the ways that tropes and textual devices, from metaphor to narrative, influence human communication and civic engagement. This course explores a variety of recent scholarly work that expands rhetoric to account for visual, auditory, tactile and other sensory aspects of rhetoric. We will explore the ways that sensory factors (for example, hearing a speech at a political rally versus reading it on paper) influence the meaning and effects of public discourse. We will also explore a series of basic critical tools for reading images, music and audio, considering communication rooted in touch and exploring the persuasive features of particular spaces (e.g. malls, courtrooms, protest rallies), as well as discuss a variety of other rhetorical artifacts that shape our lived experience of the world. Finally, we will explore the broader implications of rhetoric's effects across the senses for how we think about symbolic action and civic engagement. Assignments will include a mid-length research paper, a discussion assignment, and short responses in a variety of written, visual, and audible forms. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major.

270 Rhetoric, Incarceration, and Civic Engagement

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

This course will focus on the links between civic engagement, rhetoric, citizenship, and incarcerated populations. Specifically, hosting almost all of its credit hours within the Washington State Penitentiary, the course will begin with an overview of how incarcerated populations come to be understood as citizens within society, drawing from the work of Michelle Alexander. Additionally, students will generate a topic of local, state, or national importance each semester and will research and prepare a public forum on the topic with students from the Washington State Penitentiary. Assignments include short reflection papers, visits to the Penitentiary for research and presentation workshops with incarcerated students, and a public presentation. Course may be taken twice for credit. *Note:* Almost all course meetings will occur at the Washington State Penitentiary. Students must follow all rules and guidelines of the Penitentiary on these visits. All students in the course must submit to, and pass, a criminal background check in order to participate in the course. All semester, this course's meeting time will be 5:00-8:15pm. May be repeated for a maximum of eight credits. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

300-303 Special Topics in Rhetoric Studies

1-4 credits

Courses in special topics areas within rhetorical studies. Any current offerings follow.

303 ST: The Sunken Place: Racism, Black Aesthetics, and Violence in American Film

Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

In interviews after the release of Jordan Peele's 2017 Oscar nominated film *Get Out*, he posited that the horrifying "sunken place" in the film may stand in for "an entire system that silences women, minorities, and others; it is a perpetual place of slumber regarding systemic injustice and oppression with regard to race, gender, and difference." This course will examine the notion of the sunken place to further confront racism and examine black aesthetics in American cinema. From one of the first major Hollywood films, *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to the more recent commercial and awards successes of films like *Moonlight* (2016) and *Get Out*, we will engage critically with the ways in which film has contributed to the discourse around black identities in the US. We will study how dominant representations of blackness and racism have been created and circulated on film and how they intersect with questions of gender and class. We will explore how phenomena such as slavery, colonialism, immigration, housing, and incarceration have affected racism in America and discuss how a variety of representations in film are connected to various forms of injustice and marginalization. Alongside the films, we will pursue readings from W.E.B. DuBois, Octavia Butler, Kai Ashante Wilson, and other fiction writers, theorists, and film and rhetoric scholars. Projects will include fifteen film screenings, five short papers, one cinema response essay, and other discussion based presentation assignments. May be elected as Film and Media Studies 365. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major. Distribution area: humanities.

321 Changing the Subject: Judith Butler and Philosophy

Spring

Ireland

4 credits

This course will examine the writings of contemporary philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler in response to seminal texts from the European philosophical tradition. These texts will include selections from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the "Second Essay" from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" as well as Foucault's reply to that essay, and Levinas' "Peace and Proximity." The seminar will focus on, first, the close reading of the primary source philosophical texts, placing those texts into dialogue with Butler's critical interpretation of them. Thematically, it will engage such themes as the constitution of the subject, critique, and the relationship to the Other; methodologically, it will explore Butler's deconstructive and rhetorical style of reading, using it as an exemplar for the theoretical appropriation of traditional philosophical texts. Bi-weekly seminar presentation papers will be required, as well a final presentation and researched paper. The seminar is writing intensive, and emphasizes structured peer feedback. May be elected as Philosophy 321. *Prerequisite:* Philosophy 201, Rhetoric 230, or consent of instructor.

330 Rhetorical Theory and the Human Condition

Spring

Bost

4 credits

The very question, “What is rhetoric?” prompts consternation and confusion, dialogue and dissent. From its inception in ancient Greece, the study of rhetoric has gone hand in hand with important debates over truth versus belief, the role of persuasion in social change, the relationship between identity, power and civic engagement, and the possibility of democracy. These debates have only become more pressing in the present moment, as our lives and communities are shaped by a ubiquitous array of communicative acts and sources, from cable news to the internet. Beginning with rhetoric’s classical origins, this course will explore the primary debates and conceptual tools that have shaped it as a field, focusing on how authors grappled with rhetoric’s power, the links between rhetoric and civic identity, and the role of rhetoric in social change. Throughout the semester, we will assess how rhetoric has been studied in different historical contexts to construct a picture of rhetoric’s role in molding the human condition. Course to include a final research project and several short response papers, as well as class discussion and participation. *Recommended prerequisite:* Rhetoric Studies 230.

341 The Rhetoric of Hip Hop

Spring

Hayes

4 credits

This course critically explores the impact and influence of hip-hop music and culture on American popular culture, political and social activism, and the global marketplace. The course is designed to introduce students to the history, analysis, and criticism of the messages disseminated through hip-hop culture, its various genres, business models, lyrics, and videos. We will examine the political and artistic foundations of hip-hop as rhetorical modes of communication and the issues presented by the cultural phenomenon including its relationship to issues of race, violence, and gender. We will look at the musical, visual, lyrical, and aesthetic manifestations of hip-hop over the past thirty-five years and their impact on socio-political culture, gender, and race. We will also look at specific cultural aesthetics, discourses, and practices that have given rise to hip-hop’s various rhetorical forms. In short, we will ask: what are the discursive boundaries, limits, and possibilities of something we can call “hip-hop”? In doing so, we hope to gain a better understanding of hip-hop as artistic expression and the discursive impact that this phenomenon has had on a generation. Course requirements will include class discussion, a final paper with an oral presentation, and weekly blog posts and/or discussion prompts. May be elected as Sociology 341.

342 Rhetoric and Capitalism: Exploitation, Precarity and Social Change

Fall

Bost

4 credits

From conversations about campaign finance and net neutrality to ethical debates over the labor practices used to produce contemporary communication technologies, capitalism shapes contemporary civic engagement in a variety of important ways. In this course, we will explore some of the key histories and theoretical terms necessary to understand the links between capitalism and public discourse. We will focus on two key trends: capitalism’s tendency to translate local human relationships and symbolic actions into abstract, interchangeable processes of exchange (for example through social media, creditor relationships, or monetary exchange), and the ways that capitalism makes some bodies or lives precarious while insulating other bodies or lives from risk and potential harm. Topics covered will include the *Citizens United v. FEC* Supreme Court decision, the increasing global shift to an economy based on communication and information, the relationship between conventional waged labor and other forms of labor (e.g. housework, sex work, black market economies), and the utility of various lenses, from Marxist and anarchist perspectives to feminist, ecological, critical race, and queer perspectives for rhetorically engaging with capitalism’s effects. We will also discuss some of the ways that activists have responded to these trends, from traditional labor organizing to the construction of communities removed from capitalism, to digital and social media activism. Assignments will include a mid-length research paper, a series of short reflections, and a discussion assignment.

350 Political Campaign Rhetoric
Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

This course focuses on communication used in political campaigns, particularly the Presidential and to a lesser degree Senate and House races as well as ballot initiatives in the current election year. The course examines the recent history of campaigns, the importance of character and public policy, advertisements, speeches, media coverage, debates, new technologies, demographics, and after the election, implications of the results.

353 The Rhetoric of African American Civil Rights: From the Courts to the Streets
Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

The struggle around civil rights for black U.S. Americans has utilized legal spaces to fight for justice yet has also required a turn to more resistive spaces of protest in order to demand social circumstances not infected with systemic racism. In this course, the discourse of legal, social, and ethical precedents involving African American civil rights will be explored. Issues such as housing, voting rights, marriage rights, and voting rights will be analyzed throughout the history of U.S. struggles around anti-racism. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major.

360 The Rhetoric of Social Protest: Exploring the Arab Spring
Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

This course uses a number of moments of social protest throughout the Middle East to introduce students to theories and the practice of mass persuasion, propaganda, public advocacy, and social activism. Theories are illustrated through examination of a set of case studies (e.g., Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, and more). By studying the rhetoric(s) of social protest in the context of the Middle East moment now commonly referred to as the "Arab Spring," this course examines how collective identification is created, and how groups are motivated to act in concert, particularly in contexts where protest is geared to alleviate injustice in a global context. May be elected as Sociology 344. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major.

365 Rhetoric and Violence
Not offered 2018-19

4 credits

Rhetoric's relationship to violence and subjectivity has been highly contested throughout history. From the inception of Athenian democracy in the 5th century BCE (which was both highly egalitarian but also excluded a majority of subjects from the privileges of citizenship), the limits of participation within nonviolent political and social processes have remained prominent topics of controversy. This course will explore the relationship between the subject, power, violence, and discourse. Some central questions will include: What is the relationship between rhetoric and violence? When might we call rhetoric violence? When might we think of violence as rhetorical? What is the role of discourse in constituting power and/or violent subjects? In what ways have violence and rhetoric been defined throughout history so as to constitute specific understandings of both topics as well as their role in social change and political participation? The course will explore these questions through both theoretical exploration and investigation of case studies around issues of violence and rhetoric. Assignments will include a number of short response papers, seminar based discussion, and an oral presentation.

380 Rhetorical Bodies
Spring

McDermott

4 credits

This course examines the rhetorical construction of bodies as well as the ways in which bodies are often used rhetorically. In order to carry out this examination, we will apply a variety of critical rhetorical lenses to written and visual texts. We will be particularly concerned with the intersections of social factors such as gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability and the ways in which these intersections are written on our bodies. We will read texts by classical and contemporary theorists and authors, such as Hippocrates, Quintilian, Judith Butler, Kenneth Burke, Patricia Hill Collins, Debra Hawhee, and Robert McCruer. This course will be writing intensive. May be taken for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major. May be elected as English 377.

387 Introduction to Rhetorical Criticism**Spring****Hayes****4 credits**

By approaching issues central to the study of rhetoric including criticism, text, context/history, identity, and audience, this course introduces students to the methodology and theory of rhetorical criticism. Using a variety of texts from speeches, court opinions, film, written and spoken word, political debate, advertisements, and more, students will analyze texts using a variety of rhetorical methods from classical to contemporary theory. The goal of the course is to prepare students to integrate rhetorical criticism and theory effectively and become a critic of discourse, write cogent rhetorical criticism, and to participate in larger intellectual and social communities in the conversation about rhetoric's effects on everyday lives. Required for Rhetoric Studies majors. *Recommended prerequisite:* Rhetoric Studies 230.

401, 402 Independent Study**Fall, Spring****Staff****1-4 credits**

Individually directed studies in rhetoric culminating in a presentation, paper, or other creation as arranged between the student and professor. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

403-406 Special Topics in Rhetoric Studies**1-4 credits**

Courses in special topics areas within rhetorical studies. Any current offerings follow.

487 Advanced Rhetorical Criticism and Theory**Fall****Bost****4 credits**

Advancing student understanding of rhetorical theory, particularly in examining contemporary and post-modern theories of rhetoric and their application to student theses, this course focuses on an advanced analysis of rhetoric. Students will deepen their knowledge of rhetorical criticism and theory by interrogating texts using a variety of critical methods and lenses. Students also give presentations utilizing these advanced perspectives. The goal of the course is to prepare students to perform effective rhetorical criticism, to integrate theory effectively in analyzing rhetoric, and to apply various rhetorical theories to students' senior thesis projects leading to the writing of cogent and well organized theses. *Prerequisites:* Rhetoric Studies 230 and 387; open to other students by consent of instructor.

491 Thesis**Spring****Hayes****4 credits**

Research and writing of the senior thesis. Open only to and required of senior majors.

498 Honors Thesis**Spring****Hayes****4 credits**

Research and writing of the senior honors thesis. Open only to and required of senior majors. *Prerequisite:* Admission to honors candidacy. Students wishing to be considered for honors must apply to the department during the spring semester of their junior year.