

Field Examination
History of Rhetorical Theory
November 2002

INSTRUCTIONS:

You have four hours to complete this examination.

You must answer three (3) questions.

You may **NOT** answer more than **TWO** questions from any one category.

CATEGORY 1: CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL RHETORIC

1. “Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body accomplishes the greatest of works...” Taking these words from Gorgias’ “Encomium of Helen” as your point of departure, discuss the contest between sophistry and philosophy in Ancient Greece.
2. Cicero’s *De Oratore* (*On the Making of an Orator*) models itself upon Plato’s *Phaedrus*. Taking *De Oratore* as your point of departure, discuss the appropriation of Greek rhetorical theory in Cicero, Quintilian, and Saint Augustine.
3. Thomas Conley identifies two complementary thrusts from the late Classical period that define the major themes of argumentation scholarship in the Middle Ages: the Augustinian trajectory (which gives rhetoric priority over dialectic) and the Boethian trajectory (which gives dialectic priority over rhetoric). Discuss this tension with respect to at least three Medieval scholars.

CATEGORY 2: RENAISSANCE TO NINETEENTH-CENTURY RHETORIC

1. The Italian humanists put pathos (*affectus*) at the centre of rhetoric and the *vita activa*. How does this conceptual placement define their movement with respect to Medieval rhetoric?
2. Thomas Hobbes condemned figures and tropes in the *Leviathan*. "Reasoning upon them," he wrote, "is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities." How does this view reflect the Enlightenment attitude toward rhetoric?
3. Outline the treatment of "style" in rhetoric and related disciplines, from Petrus Ramus to Hugh Blair.

CATEGORY 3: TWENTIETH-CENTURY RHETORIC

1. Several twentieth century rhetoricians developed approaches to rhetoric that saw *identification* as the key term of a 'new rhetoric'. What is new about identification, and how does it relate to the key term of classical rhetoric, *persuasion*?
2. In the "Laugh of the Medusa," Helene Cixous attempts to break open the "arid millennial ground" of the rhetorical tradition and cultivate a uniquely feminine art of "insurgent writing." Using at least three authors on your reading list, discuss the relationship between rhetoric and feminism in the Twentieth Century.
3. "Every advance in moral and epistemological knowledge has reinstated the sophists..." In a sense, these words from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* describe the course of rhetorical theory in the Twentieth Century. Discuss with reference to at least three authors on your reading list.