English 101B: Introduction to Rhetorical Studies
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Office hours: Wednesday and Friday from 3:00-4:30 in HH 250

In a phrase that captures all the modern hostility toward ancient rhetoric, novelist Jose Ortega Y Gasset once described the art of rhetoric as the “cemetery of human realities.” One of the principal objectives of this introduction to the field of rhetorical studies is to show that reports of the death and burial of rhetoric have been greatly exaggerated: rhetoric continues to inform some of the most radical endeavors of modern and contemporary thought. After a review of the origins and development of rhetoric in Classical Greece, we will examine the reinvention of rhetoric underway in the fields of philosophy (Nietzsche), linguistics (Burke), media studies (McLuhan), advertising (Barthes), political theory (Chomsky), and feminism (Irigay). As we shall see over the course of the semester, the art of rhetoric has not, like “the age of chivalry, passed amongst forgotten things...” (De Quincey).

January
4 Introduction
6 Introduction to Rhetoric
11 Introduction to Rhetoric
13 Rhetoric and Sophistry: Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”
18 Rhetoric and Comedy: Aristophanes, Clouds
20 Rhetoric and Comedy: Aristophanes, Clouds
25 Rhetoric and Philosophy: Plato, Phaedrus
27 Rhetoric and Philosophy: Plato, Phaedrus

February
1 Rhetoric and Tragedy: William Shakespeare, Othello
3 Rhetoric and Tragedy: William Shakespeare, Othello
10 Rhetoric and Linguistics: Kenneth Burke, “Terministic Screens”
15 Rhetoric and Poetry: Gerard Manley Hopkins, Sonnets
22 Break
24 Break

March
1 Rhetoric and Feminism: Helen Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”
3 Rhetoric and Feminism: Luce Irigaray, “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”
8 Rhetoric and Politics: George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”
15 Rhetoric and Propaganda: Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, “Doublespeak”
Requirements

20% Weekly Responses and Class Participation

Write a one-page paragraph in which you offer three reasons as to why the text under discussion is important to the study of rhetoric (double spaced; 1” margins; 12 point type). Be prepared to discuss your paragraph in class. Please submit responses at the end of each class. Late submissions will not be accepted. Responses will be read but not graded; you will receive credit for completing the assignment.

30% Class Presentation (4pp.)

Write an essay in which you explain the significance of your text for the study of rhetoric (double spaced; 1” margins; 12 point). Do not simply summarize the text. Instead, offer an interpretation of the text and evaluate its contribution to the field of rhetorical studies (as you understand it). Be sure to support your argument with relevant citations from the text. Since you will be reading your essay like a conference paper, strive for a formal but accessible style of presentation. Please submit your presentation the day it is read in class (for grading).

50% Final essay (12 pp.)

Write an essay in which you compare and contrast any two texts on the syllabus. Do not merely summarize these works. Instead, evaluate their contribution to the field of rhetorical studies. Be sure to support your argument with relevant citations from the text. Format: 12 point; Times New Roman; 1” margins.