In a phrase that captures all the modern hostility toward ancient rhetoric, novelist Jose Ortega Y Gasset describes the art of rhetoric as the “cemetery of human realities.” One of the principal objectives of this introduction to rhetorical studies is to show that reports of the death and burial of rhetoric have been greatly exaggerated: the ancient art of 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 (Irigray). 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 Quincy).

Syllabus

September
14 Introduction
21 Rhetoric and Sophistry: Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”
28 Rhetoric and Philosophy: Plato, Phaedrus

October
5 Rhetoric and Comedy: Aristophanes, Clouds
12 No Class
19 Rhetoric and Politics: Aristophanes, Lysistrata
26 Rhetoric and Tragedy: William Shakespeare, Othello

November
9 No Class: Conference
30 Rhetoric and Feminism: Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which Is Not One,” “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine”

December
6 Final essay due in 250 Hagey Hall
Requirements

20% Weekly Responses and Participation
Write a paragraph (1 pg.) in which you offer three reasons why the text under discussion is important to the study of rhetoric. Be prepared to read and/or discuss your paragraph in class. Please submit your typed 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 assignments).

35% Midterm Essay (8 pp.)
Write an essay in which you compare and contrast any two texts on the syllabus from Gorgias to Shakespeare. 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

45% Final essay (12 pp.)
Write an essay in which you compare and contrast any two texts on the syllabus from Nietzsche to Irigaray. 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

Attendance
Attendance, of course, is mandatory.