Professor Michael MacDonalDb
Office hours: M, T 1:00-2:00; W 5:00-6:00 in HH 250
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According to Ernest Renan, the French historian of religion, inventing the art of rhetoric was the “only mistake the Greeks made.” One of the central aims of this introductory survey of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric is to reveal the injustice of Renan’s charge. In order to situate the origins of rhetoric in its social and historical context, we will begin by exploring the complex relationship between rhetoric and culture in Classical Greece (law, science, politics, theatre, and philosophy). With this context in mind, we will then examine the appropriation of Greek rhetorical theory by the Romans, who viewed the pursuit of rhetoric as the loftiest ideal of human existence--and the means to a “world-empire” (Cicero). By the end of the course it will become apparent that the invention of rhetoric, far from being a “mistake,” represents one of the Promethean achievements of Western intellectual history.

Texts

Fall 2004

September
15 Introduction
22 Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”
29 Plato, Phaedrus; Aristotle, Rhetoric (selections)

October
6 Aristophanes, Clouds
13 No Class: Conference
20 Aristophanes, Lysistrata
27 Shakespeare, Othello

November
3 Cicero, The Orator; NB: Essay #1 due in class
10 No Class: Conference
17 Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra
24 Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory
31 Augustine, On Christian Doctrine; Gerard Manley Hopkins, Selected Poetry

December
6 Final essay due in 250 Hagey Hall

Requirements
15% 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/or contrast any two texts on the first half of the syllabus (from Gorgias' “Encomium of Helen” to Shakespeare’s Othello). 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

50% Final essay (12 pp.)

Write an essay in which you compare and/or contrast any two texts on the second half of the syllabus (from Cicero’s The Orator to the poems of Hopkins). 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