English 309A (Principles and Practices 1): Rhetorical Theory in Classical Antiquity
Professor Michael MacDonald
Office Hours: W 12:00-1:30 HH 256
m2macon@uwaterloo.ca

“A study of rhetorical theories from the Classical Period (Pre-Socratic to Augustine) with an emphasis on how these theories reflect changing attitudes towards language, reality, and the self” (UG Calendar).

According to Ernest Renan, the French historian of religion, the ancient Greeks made only one “mistake”: they invented the art of rhetoric. One of the central aims of this introductory survey of ancient Greek and Roman rhetoric is to reveal the injustice of Renan’s charge. We will begin by exploring the complex relationship between rhetoric and society - law, politics, theatre, and philosophy - in the Classical age of Greece (the Fifth century BCE), with several excursions into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. With this context in mind, we will then examine the appropriation of Greek rhetorical theory by the Romans, who viewed the pursuit of oratory 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. We will also see that the Classical tradition continues to inform the theory and practice of rhetoric in modern and “postmodern” society.

**September**
12 Introduction
14 Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”
19 Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen”
21 Plato, Gorgias
26 Aristophanes, Clouds
28 Aristophanes, Clouds

**October**
3 Aristophanes, Lysistrata
5 Aristophanes, Lysistrata
10 Plato, Phaedrus
12 Plato, Phaedrus
17 Interlude I: Shakespearean Sophistries, Othello
19 Interlude I: Shakespearean Sophistries, Othello
24 Aristotle, Rhetoric
26 Aristotle, Rhetoric
31 Anonymous, Dissoi Logoi

**November**
2 Isocrates, “Against the Sophists”
7 Cicero, The Orator
9 Cicero, The Orator
14 Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory
16 Quintilian, Institutes of Oratory
21 Interlude II: Shakespearean Sophistries, Hamlet
23 Interlude II: Shakespearean Sophistries, Hamlet
28 Saint Augustine, On Christian Doctrine (download)
30 Saint Augustine, Confessions (download)
Requirements

10% Written Responses and Class Participation
For each major text on the syllabus, you will be asked to write a response (1 pg.) in which you 1) offer three reasons why the work under discussion is important to the study of rhetoric (as you understand it), and 2) develop a question to ask your classmates. These responses demonstrate that you have read the text and serve to encourage class discussion. Please submit responses at the end of each class. Responses will be read but not graded or returned: you receive credit for completing the assignments, keeping up with the reading, and sharing your ideas with your colleagues. Handwritten, late or emailed responses will NOT be accepted. Format: double-spaced; 1” margins; 12 point Times New Roman font.

20% Presentation (5 pp.)
Write an essay in which you explain the significance of your text for the study of rhetoric. Do not summarize the text. Instead, offer an interpretation of the text and assess its contribution to the field of rhetorical studies. 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. Format: double-spaced; 12 point Times New Roman; 1” margins.

50% Final essay (15 pp.)
Write an essay in which you compare and/or 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.

20% Final Examination
The exam will ask you to identify and discuss key terms and passages from the reading list.

Policies
= students are required to bring the reader to every class
= In keeping with the University of Waterloo’s undergraduate attendance policy, students are “expected to attend all meets” of the course and “may be required to present documentation proving the reasons for non-attendance” (UG Calendar). Please note that students “removed from a class in accordance with this policy will be notified by the Registrar’s office” (UG Calendar).
= students are expected to be informed, attentive and courteous in class. Gossiping, note-passing and other types of discourteous behaviour will be discouraged.
= do your best to be on time: attendance is taken at the beginning of class
= please do not use laptop computers in class