ENGLISH 309B

RHETORICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE FROM THE MIDDLE AGES
TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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Course Objectives: After completing this course students should have

1) a theoretical framework for analyzing the rhetorical motives behind
changes in rhetorical theory and practice, especially
2) an understanding of how different historical periods generate
different theories of rhetoric to reinforce and challenge social, political,
religious, and intellectual structures and hierarchies
3) the ability to apply the rhetorical insights of past theories to
contemporary discourses

Course Organization: This course consists of a series of lectures/discussions covering three
periods of rhetoric (the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment) as well as three
major issues ("Rhetorics of Religion," "Rhetoric, Writing, and the Social Construction of the
Self," and "Rhetorics of Reform/ Rhetorics of Reaction." After these lectures, you will form
groups of threes or fours. For one class during the latter half of the term, each group will meet
with me in my office for 1 - 1.5 hours. During this time, one student will read a 5-6 page
abstract of a 8-10 page paper written for the occasion. For the next 15 minutes, the other
student (who will have read the paper in advance and have done his or her own research on the
topic) will respond to the paper. Each student will take turns reading and being a respondent.
When your tutorial is over, you need not attend any other classes. You will need this time,
however, to prepare for a final examination (I will give the questions out in advance).

Course Marks Breakdown:

Tutorial Paper: 40 marks
Tutorial Response: 20 marks
Final Examination: 40 marks

Course Text: The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present. Edited
by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND TOPICS

I. RHETORICS OF RELIGION

Suggested Contemporary Readings from The Rhetorical Tradition:

Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives, A Rhetoric of Motives, Language as Symbolic Action
Richard Weaver, Language is Sermonic, The Phaedrus and the Nature of Rhetoric

May 5  St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine
10    St. Augustine
12    Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique
17    Margaret Fell, Women's Speaking Justified
19    Sarah Grimke, Letters on the Equality of the Sexes
24    HOLIDAY
26    Friedrich Nietzsche, On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense
31- June 2    READING WEEK

II. RHETORIC, WRITING, AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF

Suggested Contemporary Readings from The Rhetorical Tradition:

Mikhail Bakhtin, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language
   The Problem of Speech Genres
Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge
   The Order of Discourse
Helene Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa, A Woman Mistress
Julia Kristeva, Women's Time

June 7    Anonymous of Bologna, The Principles of Letter Writing
9    Anonymous of Bologna
14    Erasmus, Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style
16    Erasmus
III. RHETORICS OF REFORM/ RHETORICS OF REACTION

Suggested Contemporary Readings from The Rhetorical Tradition:

- Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives, A Rhetoric of Motives*

- June 23 Peter Ramus, *Arguments in Rhetoric Against Quintilian*
- 28 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
- 30 Giambattista Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time*
  TUTORIAL PAPERS DUE
- July 5 Gilbert Austin, *Chironomia*
- 7 Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*

IV. TUTORIALS
DIRECTED READING QUESTIONS

For St. Augustine, On Christine Doctrine Book IV

1. Who is the implied readership of this treatise? Namely, what kind of reader does the text assume? What designs does A’s treatise have on this reader? (1-8) What is the ethos of the implied writer? Namely, what kind of character traits does the text seem to project for the writer?

2. What is A’s rhetorical ideal? What seems to be the relationship between his ideal rhetoric and his religious beliefs? (2-8).

3. What is the implied reader asked to give up in order to secure this ideal? (7-8)

4. According to A., what are the signs of eloquence in a text? Why is it important for A to find these signs in Scripture? (11-21).

5. How and why does A. privilege instruction over pleasing and persuading? (27-32)

6. What arguments does A. offer to overcome the objection to rhetoric voiced in para. 32?

7. How does A. use Scriptural authority to argue his case for the religious need for rhetoric? (35-64)

8. How does A. use Classical authority to argue his case? Does A use Scriptural and Classical authorities differently?