

Department of English
Field Examination

History of Rhetorical Theory

November 2005

INSTRUCTIONS

You have four hours to complete this examination.

You must answer three (3) questions.

You may **NOT** answer more than **TWO** questions from any one category.

Category 1: Classical and Medieval Rhetoric

Drawing on at least Aristotle and Plato, on the Greek hand, and Cicero and Quintilian, on the Roman hand, discuss ethos as a point of connection and divergence between Greek and Roman rhetorical theory.

“What is becoming to a speech is truth,” Gorgias said (“Encomium of Helen”). Relate this observation to the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy in Classical Greece. Include at least Gorgias, Plato, and Aristotle in your discussion.

Outline the three rhetorical arts of the Middle Ages, tracing their origins and their legacies.

Category 2: Renaissance and Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric

The rediscovery of Cicero and Quintilian was one of the decisive events of the European Renaissance. Drawing on at least three authors, discuss the legacy of Roman rhetoric in Renaissance humanism.

With reference to at least Erasmus, Ramus, and Thomas Wilson, discuss the relative importance in Renaissance rhetoric of invention, on the one hand, and style, on the other.

How did faculty psychology influence the development of rhetoric in the 18th and 19th centuries? Refer to at least Campbell, Whately, and Blair in your answer.

Category 3: Twentieth-Century Rhetoric

With reference to at least three rhetorical scholars writing in the last sixty years, discuss the obsession with agreement (adherence, assent) that drove late twentieth century rhetoric.

Rhetoric entered the twentieth century largely as a productive discipline, helping people write and speak in formal settings. It departed the century largely as a hermeneutic discipline, helping scholars investigate texts. With reference to at least three twentieth century rhetorical scholars, discuss how rhetoricians turn the machinery of generation into a machinery of interpretation.

Are we, as one recent scholar has suggested, in the midst of a “Third Sophistic”? If so, what are its dimensions? If not, why would a scholar say such a thing? Refer to at least three contemporary rhetorical scholars in your answer.