

DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

Course information

Course number: ENGL 693

Course name: Rhetoric and Poetics

Location: 231 Colson Hall

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Description

The standard history of Greek and Roman rhetoric describes the western rhetorical tradition as arising from the exigencies of political discourse. In this tradition, poetical practices have typically been relegated to the category of epideictic, or speeches of praise and blame. Walker (2000) however, has outlined a different history, one that argues the roots of rhetorical theory and practice lie not in political argument but in poetry, particularly lyric poetry.

In this course we will examine the poetical roots of rhetoric and the rhetorical effects of poetry. To ground our practice, we will begin by reading Walker along with a number of primary texts, then we will apply this method to a range of poetical/rhetorical texts chosen by the class. By doing so, we will explore the deep connections between the poetical (broadly defined) and rhetorical traditions as well as the effectiveness of contemporary epideictic practices for rhetorical action.

Required Texts

I will provide digital copies of or links to most of our course readings. The readings are listed on the [Schedule](#) and copies will be distributed via the course GoogleDrive folder. If you own copies of these texts, or prefer to seek out your own copies, feel free to do so. You will need to find access to the following texts on your own. (The Walker text is expensive. See my email to the class for alternative strategies for accessing a copy of this text via the WVU library.)

- Walker, J. (2000). *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*. Oxford, Oxford UP.

- West, M. L. (1993). *Greek Lyric Poetry*. Oxford, Oxford UP.

POLICIES

Work visibility

Due to the nature of the course, you will be sharing your work with your fellow classmates and on potentially the Web (e.g., for the [Mashup](#)). By taking this course, you are indicating that you accept these requirements. If you have any questions about these requirements, please contact me immediately.

Attendance and late work

You are expected to attend every class meeting, arriving on time and staying for the duration of the meeting. While there will be no excused absences for the course, you will be allowed one absence without penalty. The penalty for absences over the allowed limit will be one letter grade for each absence.

Any work submitted after it is due will be reduced one letter grade for each calendar day it is late. If you miss an in-class presentation due to an unavoidable emergency, we will try to reschedule it, if possible. However, such rescheduling is not guaranteed, and you should make every effort to be in class when you are required to present.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. [Reading responses](#) (25%)
2. [Mashup](#) (25%)
3. [Biographical presentation and selection of course readings](#) (25%)
4. [Research paper](#) (25%)

Reading responses

[This assignment is adapted from [an assignment](#) by D. Diane Davis.]

For each course meeting where there are assigned readings, you will compose a short, insightful response to those readings and perform it for the class.

These responses will serve multiple purposes. They will allow you to flesh out your ideas about the readings in a way that informs our course discussions. They will allow us to explore how the performance of epideictic discourse can be the basis for persuasion. Finally, your accumulated responses—and those of your classmates—will serve as a resource as you prepare for your other major projects, such as the mashup and the final research paper. To this end, this assignment will not only be one of critical and rhetorical analysis, but also one of active and sympathetic listening.

To sum up, the requirements for your responses are as follows:

- Each response should be single-spaced and fit on one side of a sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper.
- The response should summarize the assigned texts before responding to them.
- The response should be a polished piece of professional writing.
- You will perform the response for the course and submit it to me as a hard copy on the day it is due.

Mashup

You will create a multimodal project that mashes up one or more of the poetical and rhetorical texts that are covered in the first half of the semester in order to explore, in both form and content, the way(s) that poetry can be rhetoric and rhetoric can be poetry.

As Lessig argues in *Remix* (2008), a remix is a creative work that is founded on “the right to quote” (p. 56) and that uses this right to take a previous work and make something new from it; a mashup is a form of remix that combines multiple sources into a new creative work. Lessig argues that remix is one of the primary forms of creativity in our culture. As such, remix is an epideictic practice that functions to persuade its audience.

For this assignment, I would like you to take one or more of the source materials we will read in the first five meetings of the course and create a mashup that generates something new from them. You are free to use sources outside of our readings in this project: however, your mashup must include more than one source and one of those sources must be a reading assigned in our first five class meetings. To guide your work, think about how you can craft your remix as suasive, epideictic discourse for a particular audience.

I do not want to prescribe the product that you will create (for examples of the creative potential of remix, you may consult Lessig, 2008, pp. 57-76 or come talk to me). Instead, I will provide the following guidelines:

- Your mashup should remix at least two sources, one of which should be a reading from the first five class meetings.
- If the mashup is primarily textual, it should be the equivalent of 1,000-1,500 words; if it is primarily audio/visual, it should be 4-5 minutes in length. If your project does not clearly fit into either of these broad categories, please consult with me about the appropriate scope of the final product.
- During our class meeting on July 14, you will show/perform your mashup for the class and be prepared to answer questions about it.

Biographical presentation and selection of course readings

While we will cover a number of primary texts, the purpose of this course is not to survey primary texts but rather to explore an understanding of rhetoric that flows from epideictic, poetic practice. To achieve this goal, we will begin the course by reading foundational texts that establish the long history of this connection and then continue applying this method to a range of epideictic compositions chosen by you and your classmates.

Each student will be responsible for choosing the epideictic text(s) that will serve as the focus of discussion for one of our class meetings (we will establish a schedule before the end of our third meeting). Your responsibilities will include:

- Choosing a text or texts from a single author (or small group of related authors) for the class to read and respond to. You should consult with me before the due date of this assignment regarding the length and appropriateness of your selection(s).
- Supplying me with digital copies of these readings no later than one week before they are due so that I can distribute them to the class.
- During the class meeting prior to the assigned reading, presenting an 8-10 minute in-class biographical presentation on the author or authors that provides the class with an adequate context in which to understand their work.
- On the day that we read the texts you have chosen, helping to lead the class discussion of these texts.

In addition to the readings chosen by you and your classmates, I may assign additional readings throughout the semester.

Research paper

Your final project for the course will be a 15-20 page research paper. The paper should engage with the themes of the course to create a thoughtful, professional-quality written argument that follows the conventions of academic scholarship.

SCHEDULE

Prior to the first class meeting, all scheduled class meetings and readings should be considered provisional.

The schedule and readings are subject to change with appropriate notice.

Date	Readings	Assignments
Meeting 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walker, <i>Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity</i> (R&P), PrefaceKennedy, <i>A New History of Classical Rhetoric</i>, ch. 1, "Introduction: The Nature of Rhetoric" (Readings)Hart, <i>Modern Rhetorical Criticism</i>, ch. 1, "The Rhetorical Perspective" (Readings)	Reading response
Meet. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walker, <i>R&P</i>, Part I, chs. 1-2Protagoras, Selections (Readings)Gorgias, Selections (Readings)Isocrates, <i>Against the Sophists</i>	Reading response
Meet. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walker, <i>R&P</i>, Part II, chs. 3-4Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i>, Book 1Cicero, <i>De Inventione</i> [<i>Treatise on Invention</i>], Book 2	Reading response
Meet. 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walker, <i>R&P</i>, Part III, chs. 5-9West, <i>Greek Lyric Poetry</i>, Introduction, "Seventh Century," and "Seventh to Sixth Century," pp. 1-86	Reading response
Meet. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walker, <i>R&P</i>, Part IV, chs. 10-11Augustine, <i>De Doctrina Christiana</i>, Prologue and Book 4West, <i>Greek Lyric Poetry</i>, "Sixth Century," "Sixth to Fifth Century," and "Fifth Century," pp. 87-180	Reading response
Meet. 6	Mashup showcase	Mashup

Meet. 7	Simon Armitage (see readings folder in GoogleDrive) and “9/11: Out of the Blue”	Reading response
Meet. 8	Thu-, 7/17-: Individual meetings for final projects (check your email)	
Meet. 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somers-Willett, <i>The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry</i>, Introduction & Chapter 1 • Rives, “Mockingbird” (text / video) • Rives, “Sign Language” • Rives, “Op-Talk” • Isabel Elliott and Maddie Cramer, [Bitch] • [Every Year for Halloween] 	Reading response
Meet. 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sagan, <i>Cosmos</i>, chs. 1, 10 • Chyba & Sagan, “Endogenous production, exogenous delivery and impact-shock synthesis of organic molecules: An inventory for the origins of life” • <i>Cosmos</i> (1980), ep. 13 (7:09-17:39 & 48:47-55:00) • <i>Cosmos</i> (2014), “The Pale Blue Dot” • <i>Cosmos</i> (2014), “The Same Star Stuff” 	Reading response
Meet. 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James, “Product Placement in Modern Poetry” • O’Hara, “Having a Coke with You” (video/text) • O’Hara, “A Step Away from Them” • Coca-Cola, “Share a Coke This Summer (Extended Version)” • Anyclip, “Coca-Cola in the Movies” (infographic) • Lehu, “Towards a New Strategic Brand Management” in <i>Branded Entertainment</i> 	Reading response
Meet. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kinnell, selections from <i>A New Selected Poems</i> • <i>The Eco-poetry Anthology</i>, selections; Nijhuis, “Which Species Will Live?” • Anderson, “Five Species That Are Quietly Dying Off While Nobody Pays Attention” • Fears, “Mountaintop removal for coal hurts water quality and harms fish, study says” 	Reading response
Meet. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steinbeck, selections from <i>America and Americans</i> • Steinbeck, “On Fishing” 	Reading response
Meet. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harjo, selections from <i>Crazy Brave</i> • Harjo, selections from <i>She Had Some Horses</i> 	Reading response
Meet. 15	Course wrap-up	Research paper