

Fall 2007 – CRD 702  
Professor Victoria J. Gallagher  
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## **Rhetoric and Digital Media**

### **Introduction**

Rhetoric is the ancient but also very contemporary study of how human beings influence each other through the use of language and other symbol systems. As a humanistic discipline, rhetoric provides an historically rooted but evolving perspective covering argumentation and figuration, performance and text, with connections to logic, aesthetics, politics, and ethics. Recently, rhetoric has been the center of much interdisciplinary attention, as many disciplines have taken a “rhetorical turn” in their foundational concepts – anthropology, economics, history, philosophy, and sociology, for example. Rhetorical studies have firm departmental homes in both Communication and English departments nationwide, and important work is being done in both locations on the import and impact of digital technologies. This work includes attention to visual modes of communication as well as to text and interaction, while at the same time some scholars in visual design have adopted the discipline of rhetoric as an analytical frame. Rhetoric is thus an essential perspective for advanced interdisciplinary work on communication in the digital media.

### **Course objectives**

In this class we will engage in intensive critical study and evaluation of the conceptual vocabulary of rhetoric and its application to digital communication and digital media.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Use the conceptual vocabulary of both classical and contemporary rhetoric to interrogate and explicate digital communication and digital media.
2. Critique and reformulate the rhetorical vocabulary through examination of and engagement with a variety of digital media and communication artifacts.
3. Evaluate current and evolving approaches to research and criticism of digital communication and digital media
4. Identify, summarize, and criticize major trends and works in current rhetorical theory and criticism.

### **Course Materials**

Readings from current literature (journal articles as well as several books) are on library reserve and e-reserve. In addition, the following books have been ordered and are available at the bookstore:

Brummett, B. (2006). *Rhetoric in Popular Culture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Jasinski, J. (2001). *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lanham, R. (1993). *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology and the Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Warnick, B. (2002). *Critical Literacy in a Digital Era: Technology, Rhetoric, and the Public Interest*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

### **Course philosophy**

This course is run as a seminar and thus the bulk of class time will be spent on discussion of course material and student-led presentations. Learning in a seminar format depends upon preparation and involvement by the students as well as the professor. I see my role as that of interlocutor and guide, assisting and evaluating students who are well on their way to becoming independent learners and researchers.

### **Assignments**

Seminar Report and Class Discussion Leader (20%). Each student will lead class discussion and report on a particular topic and related readings for one of the class periods during the semester. In order to lead this discussion effectively, you should evoke participation with key questions, insights, examples, and provocations. For instance, you may address the theoretical assumptions, conclusions, or practical/critical implications of a reading or set of readings.

Virtual Communities Assignment (20%). Each student will create/assemble materials that represents/displays the rhetoric of a virtual community (this may be rather broadly conceived). These materials may be posted to the CRDM Wiki page via the library web page. In order to guide you in your choices about what to create/assemble, you should draw upon the insights from course readings and from additional external sources that you choose. In this report, you should briefly summarize/describe/present your work and justify the choices you made based upon the literature. The report should conclude with a critical assessment/evaluation of your work as an enactment of digital rhetoric.

Final Paper (40%). You will write a research paper representing an original effort to analyze a problem or position related to the core materials of this course. The paper may take one of three forms: a) a **theory-development paper** involving a critical review of the literature in an area related to the course topics leading to an extension of the theoretical terrain; b) an **argumentative essay**; or c) a **critical/interpretive analysis** of a specific text, artifact, or technology. The first option is most suited to an in-depth exploration of rhetorical theory and presumes significant background in this area. The second option is appropriate when you have a particular position or argument you wish to advance and/or defend. The third option is appropriate if you have access to the types of artifacts that would enable a rigorous rhetorical, critical analysis. Regardless of which option you choose, the paper should be approximately 15-20 pages in length. You will present your work orally during class on November 30<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup> and receive

feedback from the professor. Final papers are due the Tuesday of finals week, December 7<sup>th</sup> by 1:30pm. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Class Participation and Attendance (20%). Being present and actually participating are minimum requirements for a “B” level participation grade in this class. For any grade higher than that, your participation grade will depend on the quality of your contributions. Quality comments include: adding new insights to the readings, offering a different, unique, and relevant perspective on an issue, contributing to moving the discussion and analysis forward, extending rather than repeating the comments of others, and demonstrative reflective thinking.

Due to the nature of the course and the fact that we meet only once a week, attendance at all class meetings is expected. However, if circumstances arise that make it impossible to attend class, you are granted one absence without penalty. For any unexcused absences beyond the allotted one, the professor reserves the right to significantly lower your grade. Per university regulations, excused absences must fall into one of two categories: 1) sanctioned anticipated situations and 2) document emergency situations. Anticipated situations (e.g., participating in official university functions, court attendance, religious observations, or military duty) **must be submitted in writing at the beginning of the semester or one week prior to the anticipated absence.** Emergency absences (e.g. student illness, injury, or death of immediate family member) **must be documented by the Student Organization Resource Center (515-3323) or an attending physician** within one week following the emergency. Make-up work will be allowed only in situations where the absences are excused. If you miss class on a day you are scheduled to make an oral presentation, you will receive a zero for that assignment. Please consult the following web page for further information on university attendance regulations:

[http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic\\_affairs/courses\\_undergrad/REG02.20.3.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.3.php)

### Evaluation

Discussion Leader	60 points
Virtual Communities Assignment	80 points
Final Paper	160 points
<u>Attendance and Participation</u>	<u>80 points</u>
Total	400 points

### **Online Class (Course) Evaluations**

Online class evaluations will be available for students to complete during the last two weeks of class (November 26-December 9). Students will receive an email message directing them to a website where they can login using their Unity ID and complete evaluations. All evaluations are confidential; instructors will never know how any one student responded to any question, and students will never know the ratings for any particular instructors.

Evaluation website: <https://classeval.ncsu.edu>

Student help desk: [classeval@ncsu.edu](mailto:classeval@ncsu.edu)

More information about ClassEval:

<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/classeval/index.htm>

**Academic Integrity:** Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity found in the Code of Student Conduct. I expect that a student's name on any test or assignment means that the student has neither given or received unauthorized aid and that the student's work contains appropriate citation of ideas and materials that are not his or her own. Consult the following website for further details: [http://www.ncsu.edu/student\\_affairs/osc/AIpage/acaintegrity.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/AIpage/acaintegrity.html)

**ADA Statement:** Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students **at the beginning of the semester**. Contact information is as follows: 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653, [http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic\\_affairs/courses\\_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php)

**Department Equity Statement:** All persons, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, physical disability, or sexual orientation shall have equal opportunity without harassment in Department of Communication courses and programs. Any harassment should be reported immediately to either the classroom instructor or the department head.

**Calendar of Topics and Assignments** (The Professor reserves the right to make changes to this calendar – in consultation with the students – as dictated by class interests and needs).

<u>Week 1</u> Aug 28	<u>Course Introduction: Reviewing Rhetorical Theory</u> <b>Read:</b> Zappen (2005) on e-reserve, Brummett book, chpts 1-2, Also, Jasinski <i>Sourcebook</i> , Introduction, pgs.xiii-xxxv.
<u>Week 2</u> Sept. 4	<u>Conceptualizing Digital Media and Digital Communication I</u> <b>Read:</b> Levy (2001), Part I Definitions (chpt. 1-5) on e-reserve and Lanham book, preface and first two chapters
<u>Week 3</u> Sept. 11	<u>Conceptualizing Digital Media and Digital Communication II</u> <b>Read:</b> Lanham book
<u>Week 4</u> Sept. 18	<u>Community, Publics, and Virtual Community I</u> <b>Read:</b> Warnick book (2002) and Brummett book, chpts 7&8
<u>Week 5</u> Sept. 25	<u>Community, Publics, and Virtual Community II</u> <b>Read:</b> Warnick book (2002); Christine (2004) and Kelemen and Smith (2001) on e-reserve
<u>Week 6</u> Oct. 2	<u>Rhetorical Criticism in a Digital Age</u> <b>Read:</b> Warnick (1998), Brummett book, chpts 3 & 4

<u>Week 7</u> Oct. 9	<u>Visual Rhetoric</u> <b>Read:</b> Intro and chapters from Kenney and Scott (2003), Foss chapter in Hill and Helmers (2004), Gallagher and Zagacki articles (2005) and (2007), all on e-reserve.
<u>Week 8</u> Oct. 16	<u>Enacting Digital Rhetoric</u> In-class reports
<u>Week 9</u>	<u>Visual Argument</u> <b>Read:</b> Birdsell and Groarke (1996), Fleming (1996), Barker (2000)
<u>Week 10</u> Oct. 30	<u>Genre, Medium, and Form</u> <b>Read:</b> Miller (1984 and (1994), Dillon and Gushrowski (2000)
<u>Week 11</u>	<u>Genre, Medium, and Form</u> <b>Read:</b> Agre (1998), Ridell (2005), Miller and Shepherd in Gurak (2004), all on e-reserve.
<u>Week 12</u> Nov. 13	<u>Ethos, Authorship, and Trust</u> <b>Read</b> Hauser and Benoit-Barne (2002), Miller (2004), and Winseck (2002)
<u>Week 13</u> Nov. 20	NO CLASS – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS ON FINAL PAPERS
<u>Week 14</u> Nov. 27	<u>Ethos, Authorship, and Trust</u> Guest Speakers
<u>Week 15</u> Dec. 4	<b>Student Paper Presentations</b>
<u>Week 16</u>	<b>Student Paper Presentations – Exam Week</b> Final Papers Due

Levy, P. (2001). *Cyberculture* (R. Bononno, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. Chpts. 1-5.

Birdsell, David S. and Groark, Leo. (1996). Toward a Theory of Visual Argument, *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33 (1):1-10.

Fleming, David. (1996). Can Pictures be Arguments? *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33 (1): 11-23.

Foss, Sonja K. (2004). Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric. In *Defining Visual Rhetorics*. Hill, Charles A. and Helmers, Marguerite, eds. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates, Inc.): 303-313.

Gallagher, Victoria and Zagacki, Kenneth. (2005). Visibility and Rhetoric: The Power of Visual Images in Norman Rockwell's Depictions of Civil Rights. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91:175-200.

Gallagher, Victoria and Zagacki, Kenneth. (2007). Visibility and Rhetoric: Epiphanies and Transformations in the *Life* Photographs of the Selma Marches of 1965. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. In press.