

Final Project

Goal: To give you the opportunity to demonstrate your highest level of achievement as a rhetorical theorist.

Assignment: EITHER:

(a) Develop a new "debate case" raising some important issue in rhetorical theory; OR

(b) Take a stand on an important question in rhetorical theory, and defend it using cogent arguments drawn from the rhetorical tradition and from your own experience.

Details:

For either option:

- You can work individually or in pairs. Groups of more than two tend to produce worse work, but you can ask for permission.
- Ask if you want your work product to be something other than a paper (e.g., website).
- Your work product needs to be long enough to demonstrate a high level of skills. I can conceive of you doing this in one paragraph (or even the blank exam paper that is said to have gotten Gertrude Stein an "A" from William James), but probably a more reasonable expectation is "about ten pages"--of sustained argument, not padding.
- Feel free to check with me for advice about possible sources, problems you may encounter etc.

(a) "Debate case."

- A good case raises an important issue in a realistic context—like the Herndl/knowledge case, or the Opinion Manufactory case.
- The case should have:
 - A detailed story that raises the issue.
 - A list of resources which help develop answers to the issue—i.e., readings (or "readings"). At least one should be something in the BBB that we didn't read, or at least didn't pay much attention to.
 - The best arguments on both (or every) side of the issue—two short papers that represent ideal responses to the case.
 - A brief note about your own personal answer.

(b) "Take a stand" paper.

- This is a more in-depth version of a debate paper. You are expected to use at least one source (e.g. from the BBB) that we didn't read for class, or at least, didn't pay much attention to.
- Here are some sample issues from past semesters:
 - Construct and defend a Code of Ethics for the rhetoric you (hope to) practice.
 - Much of the rhetorical tradition has stressed the power of the individual rhetor (author) to craft a persuasive message. But most technical writing (legal writing, business writing) is anonymous and formulaic. Can you resolve this tension? Where is the rhetorical artistry in technical writing?
 - The Christian tradition, as well as other religious traditions, holds that only God changes minds. Nevertheless Christians (and others) continue to preach. What is the force of merely human words to convert?

Assessment: The projects will be assessed according to the same standards as the debates and debate papers: CLARITY of issue, position and arguments; strong SUPPORT from personal experience and the rhetorical tradition; RESPONSIVENESS to considerations on all sides of the issues; and effective PRESENTATION of your work. For full details, refer back to the debate assignment (also online).

Timeline:

Tues, 13th Week	Bring to class a one paragraph description of your final project idea, and be prepared to present it to the class.
Tues. 15th Week	No class; opportunities for individual/group meetings with instructor. If you have a draft you want me to look at, get it to me by 5:00 p.m. the evening before. Otherwise, although I'll answer specific questions & be available for office hours, I will <i>not</i> read drafts via email.
Thurs., 15th Week	Present the main idea of your project to the class.
Tues of Finals Week, 5:00 p.m.	Paper due, in my mailbox at Ross Hall.