

Goal:

In our everyday lives, we frequently try to persuade others with words, and are frequently the objects of persuasion ourselves. And not only do we practice rhetoric, we systematically teach and learn it. All of you will have had freshman comp in some form; many of you will even be pursuing a major in English/Rhetorical Studies or its close cousin, Tech Comm.

This course gives you the opportunity to step back and reflect on all this activity—it invites you to *think as a rhetorical theorist*. By the end of the course, you will have well-considered opinions on the nature, function and scope of rhetoric, and you will be able to defend them, both orally and in writing, using cogent arguments drawn from both the rhetorical traditions and your own experiences.

Paradoxically (perhaps) one of the questions we'll confront is whether this sort of reflection is worthwhile at all. Do you need to be a rhetorical theorist in order to be an excellent rhetorical practitioner? Do you need to know what people perhaps 2500 years dead thought? Should this course be required, or even taught at all?

Two principles guiding us from starting point to goals:

1. *Accommodation*. Everyone learns differently. Therefore everything in this syllabus can be changed—if you ask, and give me a good reason. Hint: Tell me how the change will help you learn.
2. *Responsibility*. I am committed to doing everything I can to help you learn. But fundamentally, your achievement is in your hands. It's up to you to take advantage of the opportunities and freedoms this class will offer.

Here is one conclusion you can draw from these two principles: If you have a problem or need, it can usually be accommodated *in advance*, but few excuses will be accepted *after the fact*. Or to put it in the technical terms you'll learn in this course, I encourage you to use deliberative rhetoric, not forensic rhetoric.

General overview of the path to come:

Unit 1: How to Read a Theorist (Weeks 1 & 2): We'll look closely at one basic debate in rhetorical theory—about whether rhetoric is worth studying at all—and learn how to approach these challenging texts. Your first "Gateway" paper will be due.

Unit 2: Basic Issues in Rhetorical Theory (Weeks 3-7): During this unit, we'll consider some of the standard accusations against rhetoric: that it is non-ethical, ignoring right and wrong; that it promotes mere appearances above the truth; that it empowers tyrants to subvert justice, freedom and democracy; and that it is a mere "knack," not something worthy of serious attention. Each student group will be responsible for taking a side in two formal (oral) debates, and each individual will submit a (written) decision on a third. The unit will close with the first exam.

Unit 3: Rhetorical Education (Weeks 8 & 9): One thing rhetoric has always been is something taught to young adults. In this unit, we'll look at what was taught, to whom, and why students "wanted" to learn it. The unit will close with the midterm project, in which each group will present to English faculty & students its proposal for an undergraduate rhetoric major for *today*.

Unit 4: Contemporary issues (Weeks 10-15): Where does the *force* of speech come from? Do we need a new rhetoric for women? Can the rhetorical tradition survive the new media? In this unit we'll consider a series of contemporary fundamental challenges to the rhetorical traditions we've studied thus far. The second exam will occur at the end of this unit. And in your (individual or group) final project, you'll be asked to speak like a theorist, identifying a contemporary issue of your own, selecting readings about it from the Big Black Book, and arguing both sides of it.

Resources to help you get from here to there:

1. *Class time.* Class attendance is not required, in the sense that there's no grade penalty except for the last day. But there is this obvious penalty: you will miss whatever we do. At a minimum, you should discuss your absences with your group, since missing members can cause peers problems.
2. *Peer group.* At the beginning of the quarter, you'll be assigned to a permanent small working group. Many class activities (especially at the beginning) and at least 20% of your grade will be group based. If you put in the effort necessary to make your group work, I suspect you'll learn more from your peers than from anything else in this course; you may even decide to work on a final project in common. Part of making your group work is dealing aggressively with any problem members. I've put a great reading about this online, and in general I strongly suggest—ACT FAST.
3. *The instructor.* It is easiest to reach me via email (goodwin@iastate.edu). I also *strongly* encourage you to come to my office hours with any concerns: **Mondays 10-12, Wednesdays 3-5, and freely by appointment, in 223 Ross.**
4. *Readings.* The "Big Black Book," Bizzell & Herzberg *The Rhetorical Traditions 2nd Ed.* is available at UBS. Overcoming the challenges it presents will be one of your proudest achievements this semester.
5. *Course webpage.* Grades will be kept on WebCT. The non-WebCT course webpage will contain copies of all course assignments, handouts etc. Check it out also for hints for the first quiz: <http://goodwin.public.iastate.edu/eng350/>.
6. *Your fellow students, the ISU community, and the rest of your life.*

Final Grading:

I am convinced that each of you can reach the highest level of accomplishment on the skills of forensic rhetoric, and I am committed to doing anything I can to helping you do so.

By University rule, I am also required to give you a letter grade at the end of the semester reflecting your actual level of accomplishment in meeting the primary course goal. In this class, letter grades have the following meaning:

“A” Excellent achievement—Mustering your nuanced reading of difficult texts from the traditions, your sensitivity to rhetoric in practice, and your argumentative skill, you make a significant contribution to rhetorical theory; you teach me something.

“B” Good achievement—You can see opportunities for theorizing in your everyday life, and can respond to them with good arguments drawn from your experience and from the full breadth of the rhetorical traditions.

“C” Adequate achievement—You are able to take your own position on major issues, and muster work-personlike arguments from your own experience and the traditions in support.

“D” Inadequate achievement—You can sketch a few arguments on assigned topics, including a few quotes from the readings.

“F” Failing work—your work demonstrates no significant advance over the skills I expect an average student with no special training in rhetorical theory would have.

To make things easier on us, the following will be the basic or “default” method of assessing your accomplishments in order to assign letter grades:

<u>Due</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Unit 1	First "Gateway" paper	P/F
Unit 2	Oral debates (group), highest of two	10
	Debate paper	10
	First Exam	20
Unit 3	Midterm project (group)	10
Unit 4	Pop quizzes/class participation	10
	Second "Gateway" Paper	P/F
	Second exam	20
Exam	Final project (individual/group)	20
	Final self-assessment	step up/no change/step down

Notice that in addition to the regular assignments (exams, paper, debates, projects) there are three "ungraded" ones.

First, the two "Gateway" papers ask you to express your views on two vital subjects for this class—the nature of *rhetoric*, and the nature of *theory*. They will be graded on a pass/no pass basis. **You will not pass the course unless you pass both Gateway papers.** Note that you'll be able to rewrite them both until they do pass.

Second, in the final self-assessment you'll analyze your own learning in this class. The self-assessment is ungraded, but can raise or lower your basic grade.

In accordance with the Principle of Accommodation, I am willing to change this scheme to meet your individual learning needs. I will accept any method for grading that assesses your level of accomplishment on the course goal. It may include activities beyond the regular assignments in the course—what would usually be called “extra credit.” But in any case, it will reflect the high expectations I have for every student in this class. You must request a personalized grading scheme on or before Thursday of 10th week.

Finally, please note that class attendance is required on the last day of class, subject to a one step grade penalty (e.g., B to B-).

Schedule in detail:

Day	Date	What to read before class (Big Black Book, unless noted)	What to expect in class: topics, activities & assignments due
1 T	10 Jan	---	<u>Unit One: How to Read a Theorist.</u> Introduction to the course.
R	12 Jan	This Syllabus Socrates (Plato), 96-99 The Basic Questions (handout)	Pop quiz on this Syllabus. How to read a theorist: Socrates rejects rhetoric.
2 T	17 Jan	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> , 80-96 About group work (online)	First "Gateway" paper due. Group contract & first abstract due. Plato against the sophists.
R	19 Jan	Gorgias, "On Helen," 44-46 Protagoras (handout) About the debates (handout) About the exams (online)	What were the sophists really saying? About the upcoming debates.
3 T	24 Jan	Quintilian, Book 1, chap. 15-21 (384-400), Book 12, chap. 1-2 (412-22) Peter Ramus, up through 686	<u>Unit Two: Basic Issues.</u> Does the good rhetorician need to be a good person?
R	26 Jan	(cont.)	Debate 1: Group 1 v. Group 2; Group 3 writes.
4 T	31 Jan	Cicero, <i>De Oratore</i> , Book 1, chap. 12-end	What does the rhetorician need to know?
R	2 Feb	(cont.)	Debate 2: Group 3 v. Group 4; Group 1 writes.
5 T	7 Feb	Augustine, Book 4 up through sect. 32 Friedrich Nietzsche (all) Richard Weaver, "Language is Sermonic"	Is truth necessary to rhetoric?
R	9 Feb	(cont.)	Debate 3: Group 2 v. Group 3; Group 4 writes.
6 T	14 Feb	Cicero, <i>De Oratore</i> , Book 1 chap. 1-10 Frederick Douglass, "Narrative" Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse" Real debate? (online)	Does rhetoric sustain or corrupt democracy?
R	16 Feb	(cont.)	Debate 4: Group 4 v. Group 1; Group 2 writes.
7 T	21 Feb	---	First exam.
R	23 Feb	On learning goals (online) About the midterm project (handout)	<u>Unit Three: Rhetorical Education.</u> About the midterm project. Rhetorical education throughout history: what, who, why?

8 T	28 Feb	Aristotle, Book 1 chap. 1-3 Quintilian, Book 2 chap. 1-13 <i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i> , Book 4 chap. 12-end (skim)	Rhetorical education in classical antiquity.
R	2 Mar	Hugh Blair, Introduction Richard Whately, Introduction Alexander Bain and Adams Sherman Hill (all)	Rhetorical education in England & America.
9 T	6 Mar	---	No class; group prep time.
R	8 Mar	NOTE: Class will meet 5:15-6:30 p.m.	Midterm project presentations: Rhetorical education today.
Spring Break			
10 T	21 Mar	About the final projects (handout). Select one reading—your choice.	Unit Four: Contemporary Issues. Pop quiz on "your choice" reading. What are contemporary issues? Organizational day for the rest of the semester, including final projects.
R	23 Mar	Kenneth Burke, <i>Language as Symbolic Action</i>	What gives speech <i>force</i> ? It's from language itself.
11 T	28 Mar	Wayne Booth (all)	Force? From good arguments!
R	30 Mar	Mikhail Bakhtin (all)	Force? It's from the relationship speech creates between people.
12 T	4 Apl	Sarah Grimké (all) Frances Willard (all)	Is rhetoric gendered? Early views.
R	6 Apl	Hélène Cixous (all)	Gender? Contemporary views,
13 T	11 Apl	Readings TBA	Topic TBA
R	13 Apl	Readings TBA	Topic TBA
14 T	18 Apl	---	Second "Gateway" paper due. Second Exam.
R	20 Apl	---	No class; final project meetings with instructor.
15 T	25 Apl	---	No class; final project meetings with instructor.
R	27 Apl	About the final self-assessment.	Final project mini-presentations. About the final self-assessment. Course evaluations. Attendance required subject to a one step grade penalty.
16 T	2 May	---	Final projects and final self-assessments due in my mailbox at 203 Ross by 5:00 p.m.

Last Time's Student Comments

At the end of the course, I'll ask you to say a few words to future students, which I will put in the syllabus exactly as you write them. Here are all the responses from the last time I taught this course (Spring '04).

This course will require perhaps the most reading you've ever done. This course will expand your thinking. Remember this is a required class.

Read the texts. Apply the readings. Wrap your mind around the concepts and see rhetoric not as a magicians' cookbook for persuasion, but a catalyst for exciting ideas about the uses of language.

If you are going to take this class, and I suggest you do, make sure to take it from Jean Goodwin. The class is set up and assignments are diverse & interactive. You will be surprised how much you come to enjoy and engage in rhetorical theory.

If you take this class, be prepared to read difficult texts. It helps if you write an abstract for every text you read.

The grading criteria for assignments is vague. There are no real quantitative measures. Ask for what she is looking for specifically for each assignment.

Depend on your group, they can help you a lot. Keep up with the readings or you will really fall behind. This course requires a lot of individual effort.

It is a lot of hard reading, but if you keep up you will do fine.

Do the readings & attend class, it helps to grasp the material.

You should expect a tremendous amount of group work, but it is very helpful to your learning. There are lots of difficult readings, so plan on spending a lot of time with the big fat textbook.

If it is still required for your major you will have to take it. Don't worry, it isn't that bad.

This class wasn't as bad as I originally thought it'd be. If you're an English major, you have to take it anyway.

This class entails a lot of long, difficult readings. However, if you take the time to read them and think about them it could be the most worthwhile thing you take from this class—that is, (1) the skills to read & think critically about difficult texts and (2) a very strong base knowledge about the rhetorical tradition.

Read slowly and carefully. Ask questions about what's expected for you to understand. Don't be afraid to make a point in discussions, no matter how absurd.

Take it from me kids, if you're not good w/challenging readings and in-depth discussions, either take another course, or get ready for a tough course!

Be prepared to work hard for even a C. The first half of the course will determine students' will to take the course. Have others check over your work to compare the grades in the end, this course is sometimes unfair when it comes to grading.

You'll read until your head hurts. And then you'll read some more. Eventually, you'll find something exciting, and the rest won't seem so bad.

Be prepared for critical thinking, and even though the texts are difficult, read them! They are actually interesting.

Students should actually do the reading before class because even if you don't understand it, you can apply the class discussion to it.