
Special Topics Graduate Seminar
Department of Communication
COMM 6200-2
Fall, 2009

Thursdays, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Hellems 77

Prof. Peter Simonson
Office: Hellems 96
Office Hours: Tues 2-3:30, Thurs 5-6, and by appt.

Among everything else that it was, the twentieth could be called The Rhetorical Century. It witnessed a dramatic volumetric expansion of discourse traditionally classified as rhetorical—addressed to the many, and strategically aimed at persuasion, education, entertainment, and (somewhat less frequently) spiritual uplift. Powerful technologies and techniques re-shaped and disseminated rhetoric in its various guises—among them state-sponsored propaganda, public relations, mass marketing and advertising, public opinion polls, motion pictures, photographic magazines, sound recordings, radio and television broadcasting, satellites, and the internet. In the contexts of those developments, rhetoric as an intellectual topic was revived and refigured—both explicitly, by a series of thinkers who resuscitated a discredited subject; and implicitly, in the guises of propaganda, public opinion, and mass communications research; media and cultural studies; and a range of other subfields.

This seminar will explore intellectual, social, and technological currents of the Rhetorical Century as it played itself out, primarily in the United States, from the beginning of World War I into the 1990s. After gaining contextual knowledge about media technologies and audiences in the centuries leading into the twentieth, we will explore thinking about rhetoric and traditionally rhetorical topics ranging from debates about publics and propaganda in the 1920s and ‘30s through critical and postmodernist theories in the 1980s and ‘90s. We will aim to put differing perspectives into conversation, and place texts in broader contexts of thinking about communication, media, and rhetoric. The course is intended to both to familiarize students with intellectual topics, debates, and schools of thought; and to stoke their thinking about theoretical and empirical areas of inquiry they are already interested in.

Required Texts:


Other readings will be available through the CULearn website.
Course Requirements: You may choose one of two options:

1. Seminar Paper Option: A 25-30 page research paper on a topic related to the course, which goes through the following three stages:
   a. Proposal, worked out in dialogue with Simonson (250-words, due 9/24)
   b. Rough draft of the paper, submitted to Simonson by Tuesday 11/10 (before he leaves for the NCA convention) or, at the latest, by 11/19
   c. Final paper, and 10-minute oral presentation of it (during our final class, 12/10)

2. Annotated Bibliography and Final Exam Option, which involves the following requirements:
   a. An annotated bibliography, on a topic of interest to you and of potential use to other students in the class, covering recent work in some area broadly related to the course (e.g. theories of news, women and media, Continental rhetorical thought, psychoanalytic approaches to media/rhetoric, public sphere theory, media and religion, etc). The bibliography should include 20-25 articles and books, each with a 3-5 sentence annotation that indicates their focus, scope, and main argument (due 11/19)
   b. A final exam, consisting of two questions—one submitted by the student (in conversation with Simonson), the other from a short list of questions provided. The exam questions will be distributed in class on 11/19, and be due at 5:00 p.m on Monday, 12/7. Students should expect to write 8-12 pages per question.
   c. An oral defense of the exam with Simonson (12/9 or 12/10), and a 5-minute presentation of it to the group (during our final class, 12/10)

Grades will break down this way:

Seminar Paper: 2/3, Participation: 1/3

or

Annotated Bib 1/3, Final Exam 1/3, Participation 1/3
Course Schedule

August 27: Introduction to the Course

Reading for Today:
Richard McKeon, “The Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Art” (1971)

September 3: Historical Horizons I: Print, Public Spheres, and Industrial Power before the Twentieth Century

Readings for Today:
Burke and Briggs, Social History of Media, 1-150

September 10: Historical Horizons II: Information, Education, Entertainment, and Audiences in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Readings for Today:
Burke and Briggs, Social History of Media, 151-215
Butsch, Citizen Audience, 1-144

September 17: Propaganda and Publics in the Interwar Years

Readings for Today:
Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (1922), 3-20; “The Disenchanted Man” (1925), in MCAST, 36-41
John Dewey, The Public and Its Problems (1927), 110-84 (chs. 4-5)
Harold Lasswell, “The Results of Propaganda” (1927), MCAST, 47-50
Foreward to the first issue of Public Opinion Quarterly (1937), MCAST, 116-117.
Albert McClung Lee and Elizabeth Briant Lee, selections from The Fine Art of Propaganda (1937), MCAST 124-27
George Gallup and Saul Rae, “A Powerful, Bold, and Unmeasurable Party?” (1940), MCAST, 128-33.

September 24: Reviving Rhetoric in the 1930s

Readings for Today:
I.A. Richards, selections from Interpretations in Teaching (1938) and The Philosophy of Rhetoric (1936), 84-117 in Ann E. Berthoff, ed., Richards on Rhetoric

October 1: The Sociology of Mass Communication at Columbia, 1940s-'50s

**Readings for Today** (prioritize in this order if you are pressed for time):
- Paul Lazarsfeld, “Administrative and Critical Communications Research” (1941), in MCAST, 166-73
- Herta Herzog, “On Borrowed Experience: An Analysis of Daytime Listening Sketches” (1941), in MCAST, 139-56
- Robert K. Merton, with Marjorie Fiske and Alberta Curtis, selections from *Mass Persuasion: The Social Psychology of a War Bond Drive* (1946), 1-19, 142-74

October 8: The Sociology of Mass Communication at Chicago, 1930s-1950s

**Readings for Today**:
- Helen MacGill Hughes, “Human Interest Stories and Democracy” (1937), in MCAST, 118-23
- Louis Wirth, “Consensus and Mass Communication” (1948), in MCAST, 249-53
- David Riesman, with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glazer, excerpts from *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), in MCAST, 293-308
- Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, “The Unique Perspective of Television and Its Effect: A Pilot Study” (1952), in MCAST, 328-37
- Hugh Dalziel Duncan, selections from *Language and Literature in Society* (1953), 103-140

October 15: Rhetoric’s Revival in the 1940s and ‘50s

**Readings for Today**:
- Richard Weaver, “The Great Stereopticon” (1948), and “The Cultural Role of Rhetoric” (1961)
- Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, selections from *A Treatise on Argumentation* (published in French in 1958, and translated in English in 1969), 1-13, 155-78
October 22: The Question of Publics Revisited (in a Mass Society)

Readings for Today:
- Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, selections from *Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications* (1955), 1-42
- Hannah Arendt, selections from *The Human Condition* (1958), 1-13, 155-78
- Jürgen Habermas, selections from *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (published in German in 1962, and translated English in 1989), 1-5, 244-250; and “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” (1973)

October 29: Media and Modernity in the 1950s and ‘60s

Readings for Today:
- Harold Innis, “Critical Review” (1948) and “Industrialism and Cultural Values” (1950), the latter in MCAST, 275-79
- Burke and Briggs, “Convergence,” in *Social History of Media*, 216-53

November 5: Discourse and Deconstructions Post-1968

Readings for Today:
- Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), rpt in Bizzell and Herzberg, 1130-38
- Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding” (1973)
- Sally Miller Gearhardt, “The Womanization of Rhetoric” (1979)

November 12: No Class. National Communication Association Convention

November 19: Reconstructions and Other Revivals, Post-1968

Richard McKeon, “Uses of Rhetoric in a Technological Age: Architectonic Productive Arts” (1971) [re-read]
Michael Leff, “Modern Sophistic and the Unity of Rhetoric” (1987)
John Bender and David E. Wellbury, “Rhetoricality,” in The Ends of Rhetoric (1990), 3-42
Iris Marion Young, “Inclusive Political Communication,” in Inclusion and Democracy (2000), 52-80

November 26: Thanksgiving Break

December 3: No Class. Writing Week

December 10: Paper and Exam Presentations