Reading Rhetorical Theory

READING RHETORICAL THEORY

Speech, Representation, and Power

ATILLA HALLSBY

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INTRODUCTION

Atilla Hallsby

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Assembled, Written, and Recorded by

ATILLA HALLSBY

Why this Online Textbook?

With the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic in Spring 2020, I began the process of transitioning course content from the in-person version of my large lecture, "Introduction to Rhetorical Theory," to this platform. My intention was to create an accessible repository for teaching materials that would enable students to access the course remotely while minimizing the stress associated with this transition. After several semesters, I added recorded lectures, supplementary embedded videos, and guidance for written assignments. In its present form, the book now functions well for "flipped" modalities of teaching, both in-person and online. Given the significant labor cost associated with transitioning courses online, my hope was to (1) offload some of the effort of moving classes online by creating an open resource for other instructors to draw upon, (2) to provide a basis for instructors to justify the appropriateness of a rhetorical theory course for an online modality of teaching, and (3) to lighten the burden upon instructors and students at a time when online/in-person pivots are increasingly likely and unpredictable.

Reading Rhetorical Theory also provides a number of additional advantages over a conventional textbook.

- There is no cost to either the instructor or the student.
- It enables instructors to teach in a range of modalities, or to move between online and in-person administration as needed.
- It is formatted for reading/watching/listening on mobile devices and computers.
- The online format allows course content to be updated on the go, rather than releasing successive editions over time.
- Chapters/entries offer multiple ways for students to receive the materials. The written chapters contain the same content as the posted recorded lectures (although occasionally, the recordings will be truncated (i.e., shortened) compared to material posted in the textbook to avoid excessively long lectures).
- It provides a course shell that harmonizes with an ever-present need for online teaching in synchronous and asynchronous modalities while minimizing the amount of preparation required to teach.

Exam and quiz questions are currently available to confirmed course instructors on an individual basis. If you wish to access assessment questions, contribute to this resource, supply correction notices for content and/or broken links, or otherwise have feedback or requests regarding *Reading Rhetorical Theory*, please feel free to send a message to me using the email address listed at the bottom of this page. **To avoid confusion while reading, please note!** *__There is no chapter 13 in this book__*. **Instead,** *Reading Rhetorical Theory* **skips from chapter 12 to chapter 14.**

Why Speech, Representation, and Power?

When it is traced to Greek and Western European roots, the academic tradition of rhetorical studies is often

divided into two categories, which correspond with its evolution as a tradition of higher learning: *Rhetorica Docens* and *Rhetorica Utens*. *Rhetorica Docens* is rhetoric as *theory*. Of the two, it is the earlier-occurring category and refers to an art (*techne*) of speech, spectacle, and fabrication governed by specific rules. This art is prescriptive in nature, in the sense that it offers guidelines for how speech can and should be organized and delivered. Frequently associated with the sophist Gorgias, the tradition of artful speaking diminished in importance between the 7th and the 15th centuries CE, displaced by the traditions of logic and dialectic. *Rhetorica Utens* is rhetoric as *practice*. Associated with Isocrates, it is a method of civic discourse that attends to the potential (*dynamis*) of speech and its enactment (*praxis*). It is a political process that organizes a population, guiding them toward prudent actions in the face of uncertain decisions.

As concerns *Rhetorica Docens* and *Rhetorica Utens*, this book is about rhetoric as *theory* AND as *practice*. Per the title, I expand upon these themes by offering three core understandings of rhetoric that progressively unfold over the chapters: Rhetoric as *speech,* Rhetoric as *representation*, and Rhetoric as *power*.

- **Rhetoric as an art of *speech*** is often the most familiar form of rhetoric for undergraduate students. They frequently encounter rhetoric as a systematic account of how to deliver genre-defined oratory in public speaking and argumentation classes. Here, rhetoric is about *speech* insofar as it concerns the practice of suasive speaking and writing, the artistic proofs (*ethos, pathos,* and *logos*) employed by a given speaker, as well as the political consequences of speaking that are hard-wired into rhetoric's suite of theories. Speech describes a mode of translating thought into action, of imagining the disposition of those spoken-to or spoken-about, and vigilantly attending to the ethical consequences of speaking in public.

- **Rhetoric as an art of *representation*** expands upon speech by taking into account signs and symbols as vehicles for communication and persuasion. Representation requires a similar craft as spoken rhetoric insofar as signs and symbols are designed with an audience in mind. However, these audiences are often more sprawling and less easily defined than a physical audience, or people gathered in proximity to a single speaker. It also requires a different kind of literacy from audiences who regularly encounter signs and symbols because representations create an ideological matrix of belief and action. Representations are working upon us even when they do not appear to be doing anything at all; they describe ways of shaping the world, bringing forth thought and action at the level of the collective, the mass public, and the nation.

- **Rhetoric as a technology of *power*** describes the way that communication, persuasion, speech, and representation work in tandem to create and dismantle a "natural" conception of lived reality. Rhetoric makes and unmakes social and symbolic hierarchies; it attunes us to (incorrectly) believe that social stratification is normal or natural and provides an available means of undermining the social hierarchies that have become entrenched parts of lived experience. As a technology of power, rhetoric alerts us to the fact that our experiences speech, representation, and force are vastly different from one another. My familiar way of understanding and navigating this world cannot be generalized. It is habituated, made

familiar by systems that are beyond perception but not beyond change. Power varies vastly depending on our experience in this nation or in others depending, for instance, on one's position relative to the history of colonization, human enslavement, and imperialism. Because power is distinct within different cultures, under different forms of governance, and within distinct racial and gendered regimes, rhetoric can help us to understand how power acquires the feel of being 'natural' or 'normal' and how a shift in speaking and action can recalibrate these force relations.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

CH. 1

WHAT IS RHETORIC?

A short introduction to the history and theory of rhetoric. Introduces rhetoric as-speech, representation, & power.

CH. 2-3

ANCIENT RHETORICAL THEORY

Rhetoric is a technique of speech-giving that seeks to move an audience. Situated in ancient Greece, rhetoric is both a problematic art and one that is crucial for political life.

CH. 4-5

THE SYMBOL AND THE SIGN

Rhetoric is a way of creating and decoding representations. It is built into language and expressed in many forms, including modern propaganda and demagoguery.

CH. 6

RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY

Rhetoric describes how representations are used to exercise power through shared structures of belief.

CH. 7-9

NARRATIVES, ARGUMENTS, AND VISUAL RHETORIC

Rhetoric describes how speech and representation work together to create sites of shared meaning-making.

CH. 10

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Rhetoric describes a specific mode of analysis proper to speech of lasting political or popular significance.

CH. 11-14

SETTLER COLONIAL, SECRECY, AND DIGITAL RHETORICS

Rhetoric is a technique of exercising power by creating, demystifying, and dismantline relations of force and social hierarchy.

The end of the book contains an appendix, guidelines for short written assignments, and sample study guides that have been used for this course.

TO SEE OTHER CLASSES LIKE THIS ONE, VISIT

HTTPS://THE-UN-

The plan of this book moves from rhetoric as an art of speech to rhetoric as a technology of power. The early chapters provide definitions and context for rhetoric as *speech,* middle chapters (e.g., on signs, symbols, visual images, argumentation, and narrative) describe rhetoric as *representation,* and the concluding chapters (e.g., on settler colonialism, secrecy, and digital rhetoric) elaborate on rhetoric as a technology of *power.* Of course, there is considerable overlap across these areas: the chapter on "rhetoric and ideology" sets the stage for later understandings of rhetoric as *power*; the chapter on "the rhetorical situation" hearkens back to the introductory understanding of rhetoric as *speech*. Additionally, there is only so much time in a semester and only so much ground a course can cover. Even so, my hope is to update and expand these chapters and to invite others to contribute their unique work and necessary perspective to the tentative foundation that has been laid here. This and related courses are available to peruse at the companion website to this Online Textbook. If you are an instructor or student who wishes to contribute to the resource, please do not hesitate to reach out at the email address provided below.

As a final note, although each chapter also includes a note on how to cite this book, I strongly encourage students to cite the linked sources within the text itself. One example is the term "persona," which has a long scholarly history in rhetorical studies. Many of the folks who have contributed to this conversation are cited if not also hyperlinked within this book. The same goes for any number of other concepts. *Please cite those original sources when possible!* A key affordance of a resource like this one is that it makes a wide selection of scholarship readily available to students and instructors. These ideas are not my inventions: they are the intellectual yield of hundreds of rhetoricians, accumulated over many, many, many years. Rhetorical theory is not a finished project and our work here is ongoing. In the meanwhile, however, I wish you all the best in your teaching and learning.

Thank you for picking up this book!

I hope that it is engaging and useful. If you have feedback, we have also set up this survey for you to let us know what's working and what needs additional care.

Dr. Atilla Hallsby
RhetoricalTheoryUnTextbook@gmail.com
www.atillahallsby.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Editors and Editorial Assistants

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- **Makayla Hillukka** was a Spring 2022 Dean's First-Year Research & Creative Scholars (DFRACS) fellow and undergraduate research assistant for the UnTextbook at the University of Minnesota Twin-Cities. Makayla's recorded readings appear in Chapter 12: The Secrecy Situation and Chapter 14: The Digital Situation.
- **Milena Yishak** was a Spring 2022 Dean's First-Year Research & Creative Scholars (DFRACS) fellow and undergraduate research assistant for the UnTextbook at the University of Minnesota Twin-Cities. Milena's recorded readings appear in Chapter 8: Rhetoric and Narrative and Chapter 14: The Digital Situation.

Content Contributors

- **Dr. Michael Lechuga** researches and teaches Latina/o/x Studies Communication Studies, Rhetoric, Migration and Settler Colonialism Studies, and Affect Studies. His research explores the ways migrants and migrant communities are subjected in the US by austere migration control structures and white nationalist ideologies. His current research focuses on the role that technology plays in border security assemblages and the ways alienhood is mapped onto migrant bodies through contemporary mechanisms of white-settler governance. His recorded lecture, "Incomunicable," originally delivered at the Hugh Downs School of Communication at Arizona State University, appears in Chapter 11: The Settler Situation.
- **Dr. Emily Winderman** specializes in the rhetorical study of a wide range of reproductive healthcare, including birth control, family planning, abortion care, and birthing practices. She generally approaches these topical areas through the theoretical affordances of affect theory and public emotion, rhetorical history, and public address. Specifically, her work asks "what emotions do" in order to constitute, shape, and manage different publics' relationships to health. Her recorded lecture on "The Narrative Paradigm" appears in Chapter 8: Rhetoric and Narrative.

MAIN BODY

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS RHETORICAL THEORY?

"chicago bean during sunrise" by Wright Way Photography, CC BY 2.0

This chapter offers a brief overview and definitions of rhetorical theory. "Theory" is sometimes imagined as abstract thinking or complex philosophy. However, in this class "theory" is something that all people do when they seek to apply a way of thinking about the world to real-life circumstances. It describes the imaginative and practical meanings that are applied to a surrounding world, and how we revise those meanings in accordance with perceived changes to that environment. Rhetorical Theory most often describes our ways of understanding practices of meaning-making and interpretation that rely on *persuasion*. As explained below, persuasion is traditionally associated with historical practices of speeches and speech-making. This is why Rhetorical Theory is often described as the "art of persuasion" or the "art of speechmaking," although subsequent chapters will build on (and depart from) this foundation.

Please note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recording

- [What is Rhetorical Theory?](#) (Audio, ~12m)

Read this Next

- James, Joy. [“Teaching Theory, Talking Community.”](#) Seeking the Beloved Community: A Feminist Race Reader, State University of New York Press, 2013, pp. 3-7.
- [Handout: Definitions of Rhetoric](#)

Defining Rhetorical Theory

The two Greek words that combine to form rhetoric are *techne*, as art or skill, and *rhetor*, or speaker. The two terms are not explicitly linked in fifth-century Greek texts, and there is no explicit reference to the art of persuasion in the first recorded use of the word. The word *rhetor* was a legal term denoting a specific class of people: those who often put forward motions in courts of law and in the general assembly.

Perhaps the most widely circulated definition of rhetoric still circulating today is from Aristotle: “*the faculty of observing the available means of persuasion, in any given situation*.”[1] That means that rhetoric isn’t just how we persuade. It’s also the ability to stand back from the scenes where persuasion happens to understand how and why it is happening. Another popular definition of rhetoric is “*the capacity to affect and be affected*.” This

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1. Aristotle. Art of Rhetoric. Loeb Classical Library 193. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020.

means that rhetoric becomes the art of movement, or how people use their bodies to create movements and change. Both definitions capture the perspective that we can take when we think rhetorically: one that seeks to understand the way that influence and power move and the role of communication in creating common knowledge.

My preferred definition of rhetoric is "*the active and retroactive organization of discourse*." This means that rhetoric is a way of creating a shared perspective on the past and future, a way of organizing speech to correct or realign a point of view. At its most basic, we might think of rhetoric as "the art of speaking" or even "the art of speaking *well*," which is part of the reason why public speaking classes are housed in Communication Studies departments. Before Communication Studies existed as an academic discipline, most of these departments were named "Speech Communication," which reflects rhetoric's traditional emphasis on the theory, criticism, and practice of speech-making. That's still a central aspect of the *theory* that rhetoricians are interested in, although these theories have also grown broader in scope.

In this class, rhetoric, as we understand it today, is a collection of humanist, literary, and political theories that explain how speech motivates human action and imagines possible futures. As developed in this un-textbook, it is a theory of how **speech**, **representation**, and **power** are instruments rooted in understandings of persuasion and its audiences. Persuasion is key to rhetoric because it is both the thing that rhetoricians study and the thing that rhetorical scholarship seeks to generate: the imagining of a more just world.

More important than just defining rhetoric is thinking critically about which definitions of rhetoric that we choose to embrace. Although he is among the earliest people to theorize rhetoric, Aristotle is not always the best authority because we would register many of the views he espoused as philosophy as categorically inhumane or racist.

It is important not only to situate rhetorical theory in the context from which it emerges but also to assess the utility of these theories according to the ethical standards that we would abide by in our own present-day. As the scholar and abolitionist Joy James writes:

> Philosophy or theory courses may emphasize logic and memorizing the history of "Western" philosophy rather than the activity of creating philosophies or theorizing. When the logic of propositions is the primary object of study, how one argues becomes more important than for what one argues. The exercise of reason may take place within an illogical context — in which academic canons absurdly claim universal supremacy derived from the hierarchical splintering of humanity into greater and lesser beings, or the European Enlightenment's deification of scientific rationalism as the truly "valid" approach to "Truth.[2]

In keeping with James's statement, this class seeks to *critically* address how rhetorical theory has been made or built. It is not just about memorizing rhetoric's ancient history. It does not seek to elevate a predominantly white or "Western" tradition as the only one that matters or exists.

One way to think beyond this tradition is what rhetorical theorist Molefi Kete Asante calls *"Afrocentricity."*

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2. Joy James, *Seeking the Beloved Community*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p.4.

Afrocentricity describes a worldview that is "*pro-African and consistent in its beliefs that technology belongs to the world; Afrocentricity is African genius and African values created reconstructed and derived from our history and experiences in our best interests.*" Asante argues that Afrocentricity is essential to understanding rhetoric for the following reasons:

> "Maulana Karenga argues that "no people can turn its history and humanity over to alien hands and expect social justice and respect" (Karenga, 1979). Language is the essential instrument of social cohesion. Social cohesion is the fundamental element of liberation. All language is epistemic. Our language provides our understanding of our reality. A revolutionary language must not befuddle; it cannot be allowed to confuse. Critics must actively pursue the clarification of public language when they believe it is designed to whiten the issues. We know through science and rhetoric; they are parallel systems of epistemology. Rhetoric is art and art is as much a way of knowing as science." [3]

This course is about rhetorical terms and concepts. It is also about why it matters where and when we start rhetoric's story and why rhetorical criticism is still a useful theory of practice. In this un-textbook, we will return to ancient Greece, but with a specific purpose: to highlight the ways that rhetoric signaled a broken or unhealthy state of public and political affairs. By telling this ancient story in this way, we may also bear witness to how the characteristically unjust patterns and practices of those times live on for us in the present day.

Artistic Proofs and Genres

Let's talk about some of the most commonly discussed concepts in rhetoric and rhetorical theory: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos,* which are also known as the *artistic proofs*. The phrase "artistic proofs" means that they are the elements of persuasion that originate from the speaker, rather than from *inartistic* sources, or the data the speaker uses but did not 'originate,' 'invent,' or 'create.' Entire courses on rhetorical theory have been built around these concepts. They correspond to the major premises of Aristotle's book, the *Rhetoric*, and form three pillars that much present-day rhetorical theory is built upon.

- **Ethos**, or the appeal to authority. These are the ethical proofs derived from the moral character of the speaker.
- **Pathos**, or the appeal to the emotions. The objective of pathos is to put the hearer into a certain frame of mind using what the speaker already knows about their audience.
- **Logos**, or the appeal to reason, logic, and the word. These are the proofs contained in the speech itself when a real or apparent truth is demonstrated. The two modes of logical proof that Aristotle describes are induction and deduction. Induction refers to "bottom-up" reasoning; deduction refers to principles

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3. Molefi Kete Asante, Afrocentricity, Trenton: Africa World Press, p. 32

applied from the "top-down."

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=5#oembed-1*

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=5#oembed-2*

Aristotle's explanation of logos also describes three genres of rhetoric, which correspond to different "tenses" in which a speech may be made. These include the forensic, the epideictic, and the deliberative. In each of these, rhetoric manages some uncertainty: uncertainty over what is and what is not; uncertainty over whether to praise or to blame; and uncertainty over what one should or should not do.

The Genres of Speech

Forensic	Epideictic	Deliberative
The Past	The Present	The Future
Facts: whether a thing did or did not happen.	Values: whether to issue praise or blame.	Policy: whether we should or should not take action.
Judiciary or the Courts	Punditry or Eulogy	Legislation and Law

The **forensic** genre of rhetoric is about matters of fact, what is and is not, what did or did not happen. The forensic corresponds to the past. The site of forensic arguments is typically the judicial system and the courts. Today, the word "forensic" has meaning specifically in a criminal justice context. There, and on "forensic" science television shows, the problem is reconstructing the past, what did or did not happen, who did or did not perpetrate the act.

The **epideictic** genre of rhetoric is about matters of praise or blame, whether to celebrate or to denounce. It corresponds to the now, the place between past and future. Epideictic speeches are traditionally speeches like eulogies, special-occasion speeches, or toasts; other versions of epideictic could include newspaper opinion-editorials, news-comedy hybrids, or pundit pieces that try to offer 'spin' to politicize a person or issue. They

can also be speeches, images, and text that highlight a "now" as a particularly urgent or important moment of transition or change.

The **deliberative** genre of rhetoric is about policy and what should or should not be done. The deliberative corresponds to the future and the course of action that should be taken to attain it. It is traditionally associated with lawmaking and legislature. A speech about the decision to impeach, for instance, is a deliberative one: it is a question of policy and the path that people should pursue.

This rhetorical terminology — ethos, pathos, and logos; forensic, epideictic, and deliberative — is just some of the basic language that is most often associated with the history and discipline of rhetoric. If you take classes in rhetoric elsewhere in the university, you will very likely encounter these foundational terms again.

Histories of Rhetorical Theory

The last thing I want to talk about is the organization of this course and how it relates to the history of rhetoric. Most of the time, rhetorical theory classes start in Classical Greece, where the term was allegedly invented. They might then move through Rome into Western Europe. Many times, such classes end in the 20th century when speech communication departments began appearing in American universities around 1914. Sometimes these courses also cover the 20th century and the developments of structuralist, post-structuralist, and materialist theories. In Communication Studies, this could also include accounts of the functionalist, constructivist, and critical traditions. This course has a little bit of each of these approaches, and we will talk about each of them as the semester goes on.

The first two weeks are devoted to the so-called "**origins**" of rhetorical theory, its deeply troubling

beginnings, and the idea of the "**common good**." We start here because this history helps us to define rhetoric and illustrates how problems within a rhetorical culture illuminate similar problems that resonate with us in the early 21st century.

We then turn to several foundational 20th-century communication concepts: the **symbol**, the **sign**, **ideology**, and **argument**. These theories describe two ways of thinking about what communication is and how it occurs. They also account for shared structures of belief and agreed-upon ways of making claims and establishing facts.

The following weeks address key commonplaces in rhetorical theory: **narratives**, **visual rhetoric**, the **rhetorical situation**, and the **settler-colonial situation**. The final two weeks are dedicated to specialized topic areas that reflect some of the topical interests of rhetorical scholars today: **secrecy** and **digital rhetorics**.

By the end of this course, I hope to have made the following rhetorical ideas clear. First, that speech, words, and language have consistent and long-lasting effects. Second, that rhetoric describes a theory of the speaker and their ability to invent persuasion, a theory of the audience, and the scenes where rhetoric is received or taken up. It is also a theory of meaning-making and representation that gives text a viral life of its own. Finally, we will learn that rhetoric is a tool for ethical world-making that allows us to make more deliberate and inclusive choices about our speech.

Additional Resources

- Ira Allen, "Presentation and Rhetorical Theory" and "Fantasies of Rhetorical Theory"
- James, Joy. "Teaching Theory, Talking Community." Seeking the Beloved Community: A Feminist Race Reader, State University of New York Press, 2013, pp. 3-7.
- Handout: Definitions of Rhetoric

CHAPTER 2: THE "ORIGINS" OF RHETORICAL THEORY

Raffaello Sanzio de Urbino (Raphael), "The School of Athens" (1509-1511)

This chapter opens with the following questions: When was rhetoric invented, and by whom? What values do we endorse when we begin rhetoric's history there? How do we decide when academic traditions 'start' or 'begin'?

The first section of the chapter addresses the conventionally-told early history of rhetoric in Ancient Greece. The purpose of starting here is to draw attention to the incorrect assumptions that tend to stick to this story. The second section discusses "the sophists," who were allegedly some of the first Greek practitioners of rhetoric. It also covers "the encomium," a kind of sophistic speech that seeks to rescue a person or topic from defamation.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the

headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: <u>Why Ancient Greece?</u> (Audio, ~15m)
- Part 2: <u>Sophistic Knowledge and the Encomium</u> (Audio, ~17m)

Read this Next

- Donovan, Brian R. "The Encomium of Helen by Gorgias of Leontini." *Gorgias' Encomium of Helen*, 1999, https://faculty.bemidjistate.edu/bdonovan/helen.html.
- Jarratt, Susan, and Rory Ong. <u>"Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology."</u> *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* 1995 (1995): 9-24.

Written Assignments

- <u>Assignment Description for Short Paper 1:</u> *The Encomium*

Part 1: Why Ancient Greece?

In the last lecture, we introduced the term "rhetoric" by drawing on Greek terminology. Beginning rhetoric's history in ancient Greece is a common choice, but it is not rhetoric's only starting point. We could, for instance, "start" our history of rhetoric in 1914 with the invention of "speech communication" in American universities. (That is also how we came to have Communication Studies Departments at universities around the country). Alternatively, we could also begin in China, Egypt, South America, or Mesopotamia. In these places, documented evidence that persuasion was a studied and practiced art existed even before the Greek invention of the word "rhetoric."[1] As Carol L. Lipson and Roberta A. Binkley argue, when we think about rhetoric as the art of persuasion, it may take many different forms depending upon the original cultural context we start from.

> The classical rhetorical system has built within it an understanding that *ethos* and *pathos* are central factors in the success of a text (along with *logos*), and that *ethos* and *pathos* must be appropriately suited for the particular audience. It's not much of a stretch to look at rhetoric as contextualized culturally, with practices and values and norms differing in different cultural settings. Indeed, in the field of rhetoric and composition, the term *alternative rhetorics* is being used to describe rhetorical approaches in particular cultures that differ from the dominant paradigm.[2]

Where we choose to start rhetoric's history is important for other reasons. Greece is sometimes treated as the "first" democracy or as the birthplace of philosophy. This chapter starts in ancient Greece because I would like to challenge some of those common assumptions. Ancient Greece presents ideas about democracy and philosophy that are very different than those that are common today. Additionally, we will learn how the ancient Greek invention of rhetoric teaches us about communication problems and social inequalities that mirror the distress in our own political culture.

This chapter is also critical of the ancient Greeks because they only recognized the personhood of adult, property-owning men. These people alone were allowed to participate in democratic governance, which means that it was not a truly *egalitarian* democracy, which presumes the equality of all stakeholders or participants. Ancient Greece generally (and ancient Athens specifically) excluded foreign-born non-citizens, women, and enslaved or indentured persons from participating in the political life of the city-state (or *polis*). Ultimately, if we start the history of rhetoric with ancient Greece, then we also need to think about how the deep social inequalities of that society are reflections of related problems in the present-day United States.

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1. Lipson, Carol S., and Roberta A. Binkley. Rhetoric before and beyond the Greeks. Albany: State University of New York, 2004.
2. Lipson and Binkley, Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks, p. 10.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=33#oembed-1*

The Invention of "Rhetoric"

The previous chapter discussed how "rhetoric" combines the words "rhetor" and "techne," each of which describes a kind of speaker and their technique or art. According to rhetorical scholar Edward Schiappa, Plato invents the word "rhetoric."[3] Apparently, Plato also invented many words in his dialogues that are difficult to locate elsewhere in the Greek historical record, such as "eristic" (or point-scoring debates) and "anti-logic" (or debating both sides of an issue).

But *why* does Plato invent the word rhetoric? What was his purpose in giving a name to "the art of the speaker"? Who would have counted as a "rhetor" or "speaker" for Plato and his contemporaries? Who did the word "rhetoric" exclude?

One answer is that Plato invents the word rhetoric to describe a kind of teaching that was common when he and his teacher, Socrates, lived. According to Plato, rhetorical teaching was administered by a group of people called "the sophists". Plato was deeply skeptical of the sophists, and so he used the word rhetoric to describe speech that was dangerous and disingenuous. "The sophists" were teachers of speech and argument who would train "ordinary" citizens in the art of persuasion. The sophists were like early professors, each with their own schools and following of students. Much like today, the sophists advertised themselves as individuals who offered tools for upward mobility. By learning to speak well in public, a person could win court cases or steer public opinion. Plato and Socrates believed these teachers and their rhetorical teachings were dangerous because they promised anyone the ability to make compelling arguments in courts and the assembly without a clear sense of the values that should guide this kind of speech. However, as Plato also argues, the sophists primarily catered to people who could afford them. This means that "ordinary" must be put in scare quotes because the people who benefitted from the sophists' instruction were in all likelihood wealthy aristocrats.

Plato attacks the sophists *a lot*. In the dialogue entitled the *Sophist*, he describes the sophists, or rhetoric teachers, as "paid hunters of rich men" who have expertise in no particular subject but claim expertise in all subjects. In *Gorgias*, Plato says that rhetoric is not a true art but a "knack" of creating artificial appearances or illusions with speech. That's also where Plato allegedly invents the word rhetoric, where Plato calls sophists out – primarily the sophist Gorgias – for being opportunistic liars and charlatans.

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3. Schiappa, Edward. *"Rhêtorikê: What's in a Name? Toward a Revised History of Early Greek Rhetorical Theory."* The Quarterly Journal of Speech 78, no. 1 (1992): 1-15.

Rhetoric, according to Plato, is dangerous because it is a way of producing a "fake" reality. He argues that it is not a true art form, but a "knack" or aptitude for creating a misleading illusion. He says that it is less like medicine than "cookery." If rhetoric were a true art, it would heal the political body of the polis. But because it is just "cookery," rhetoric often sounds, looks, tastes, and smells good while in fact worsening the health of its listeners.

Tastes good, but is it good for you? "homemade pizza" by plasticrevolver, CC BY-SA 2.0

A strange twist in this story is that *no sophist ever used the word "rhetoric" to describe their public speaking lessons*. It is a word invented by Plato to call the sophist out for unethical teaching. For that reason, it is not clear that Plato is an entirely credible source on the sophists – or rhetoric. Why? Because Plato's act of pejorative naming used rhetoric to persuade people that the sophists could not be trusted. Although he dismisses rhetoric, his comparison to "cookery" is an example of rhetoric, employing persuasion to make a point. In that way, Plato is more than a philosopher; he is also a kind of sophist. He stands apart because he writes about the sophists as persuasive object lessons about the dangerous effects of rhetoric.

That is one way the Greek context reflects contemporary communication problems: Just as Plato blamed the sophists for the problems of the ancient Athenian *polis,* bad or disingenuous rhetoric is often blamed for creating "fake news," conspiracy theories, and disinformation. This book is about *reading* and *practicing* rhetoric. It also widens the scope of what rhetoric can be, beyond spoken persuasion. It is about the uses and function of rhetoric as a practical strategy of persuasion, much like the sophists taught. However, it is also about knowing rhetoric when we see it. In the case described above, this means understanding that Plato uses certain persuasive techniques to criticize the sophists, an ancient Greek group of professional persuaders.

Athenian Democracy ≠ Contemporary Democracy

Ancient Greek democracy was also very different from the structure of representation in a present-day democratic republic. Our structures of government do not look at all like Athenian democratic institutions. Before democracy in Athens, the government was based on family ties.[4] By 450 BCE, early Athenian leaders Kleisthenes and Ephialtes had instituted two political reforms in Athens, the "hallmarks" of its democracy. However, these reforms also indicate just how different this democracy was relative to a present-day American context.

1. **The lottery reforms of Kleisthenes.** Kliesthenes' reforms eliminated the aristocratic, family-based government and replaced it with a representative democracy based on wealth and land ownership. High offices were entrusted by [lot] — random selection followed by a vote — only to citizens perceived as fit. In addition to excluding women, enslaved persons, and those who did not own property in the Athenian polis, the government retained policies of *ostracism*, whereby selected individuals perceived to be too dangerous for the political life of the city-state were exiled for approximately ten years.

2. **The court reforms of Ephialtes.** Ephialtes' court reforms reduced the role of court magistrates and replaced them with common courts where decisions were rendered by juries chosen from the citizenry. The consequence of this second set of reforms (Ephialtes) was that any citizen could bring a suit against any other, and except for sacrilege or homicide, would be decided by an Athenian jury. But, in this new court system, citizens always represented themselves and had to argue their own cases. There were no lawyers in the modern sense. Additionally, juries consisted of 200+ members, and deliberations were considerably more public than they are today.

In the assembly and the courts, the ability to be eloquent was very desirable. That's "why" rhetoric, the art of the speaker, may have been both desirable and dangerous. Among the many things that the Sophists claimed to teach, public speaking was the most sought after.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=33#oembed-2*

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4. Conley, Thomas. Rhetoric in the European Tradition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 4-5.

Social Inequalities in Ancient Greece

Perhaps the most prominent parallel between ancient Greece and today are deep social inequalities. This was especially true because the reforms mentioned in the previous section didn't eliminate status or the privilege of inherited family wealth. Democracy just created a situation whereby these privileges could be neutralized by the influence a speaker might possess. It is no small irony that, because the sophists charged such large fees, mostly the wealthy could afford the instruction. Beyond wealth inequalities in ancient Greece, there is evidence that Athenian culture was *not* an ideal democracy where all people were equal and "the people" made decisions in common. This is also why Greece holds a mirror up to our own problems: it shows us how problems with our own rhetorical culture may be tied to entrenched social inequalities.

1. ***Indenture and Enslavement.*** One often-unacknowledged aspect of ancient Greek history concerns ancient Greek practices of slavery (*doulía*), which is part of rhetorical terms like *epideictic*. The peoples of ancient Syracuse are, for example, the reputed originators of *epideictic* or commemorative speech that brings persuasion "before the eyes." In its earliest recorded form, *epideictic* was a mode of secret sign-language communication among the enslaved peoples of Syracuse.[5] It was necessary for the people of Syracuse to communicate in secret because the tyrannical rulers of Syracuse, Hieron and Gelon, had prohibited people from speaking aloud. *Epideictic*, in other words, originates as a language made up of physical gestures, but then, much later, curiously appears as a name for an important genre in Aristotle's *Rhetoric.*

2. ***Denial of Citizenship to Women.*** As rhetorical scholar Jane Sutton notes, patriarchal governance in the ancient *polis* coerced women into contradictory and repressive roles.[6] They were also systematically excluded from the history of philosophy and the teaching of rhetoric. Misogyny was also perpetuated by the belief that women "cannot be controlled or possessed." Helen of Troy, for instance, was often depicted as a seductress or else denied that she possessed agency at all.[7] Greek men also openly appropriated women's intellectual contributions. In their article on Aspasia the sophist, Jarratt and Ong argue that Plato "insinuated ... that women would gain their status primarily from association with well-born men." He also "chose a form that typically referred to women only ... as reproducers of warriors." Plato also argued that his dialogues are a kind of "maieutics," or midwifery, which was Aspasia's own

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5. Farenga, Vincent. "Periphrasis on the Origin of Rhetoric." MLN 94, no. 5 (1979): 1033-1055; Vitanza, Victor J. Negation, Subjectivity, and the History of Rhetoric. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

6. Sutton, Jane. "The Taming of Polos/Polis: Rhetoric as an Achievement without Woman." The Southern Communication Journal 57, no. 2 (1992): 97-119.

7. Stormer, Nathan. "Encomium of Helen's Body: A Will to Matter" in Rhetoric, Materiality & Politics. Editors Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites. New York: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 215-227.

avowed profession. Plato "appropriates reproduction for the male philosopher," denying Aspasia (and potentially other women sophists) credit by claiming her inventions as his own.

3. ***Colonialism and Xenophobia.*** Ancient Athenians were reportedly suspicious of outside influence and were hostile to foreign-born non-citizens. Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong also describe Ancient greek xenophobia as the rejection of foreigners from the Athenian *polis.* Foreignness was a way to exclude people from participation in ancient Athens for another reason: some non-citizens were suspected of being spies. For example, Aristotle, who was not born in Athens, fled into exile to the isle of Lesbos because he was suspected to be a Macedonian spy. This was also the case with the sophists, who most often taught outside of the city limits.

> Foreigners had no more than a distant relationship to any country because they were wanderers … Athenians … were situated on the land that had created them."[8]

One reason why we should be skeptical of the idea that ancient Athens was an "ideal" democracy was that there is significant evidence that shows that the members of its society were far from "equals." As is also true in the contemporary United States, ancient Athens had deep problems related to inclusion. Only citizens — that is, wealthy, land-owning men — had the ability to participate in government. Often, those who did not have that status had their ideas and labor stolen from them. It was not an ideal democracy because it privileged those who had already accumulated wealth, power, and property.

Ultimately, we shouldn't believe that Athens was the city-state (*or polis*) in Greece that presents an "ideal" model of democracy because philosophers literally took ideas from people who had lesser status. All people who lived in the *polis* were not equals. Instead, Greek culture embraced regressive ideas about who did not count as a 'person' based on status, gender, land, and ownership.

Part 2: Sophistic Knowledge and the Encomium

This section goes into greater detail about the sophists. Who were they? What did they teach? What kinds of persuasion are they famous for?

The sophists emerged in Ancient Greece as teachers of general wisdom and were most valued because of their ability to teach public speaking. They emerged out of a culture of competition and valued poetry as a key way to keep a common record of important historical events.

Before the sophists, poets like Pindar had stood at the sidelines of athletic contests exalting the sons of

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8. Jarrat, Susan and Rory Ong, "Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology" in Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition. Edited by Andrea A. Lunsford. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995, p. 21.

aristocrats and praising heroic deeds and ideals.[9] The poet was an observer to such competitions. However, the Sophists, like other athletes, musicians, and dramatists in their era, thought of themselves *as* competitors. They sought to achieve victories by overpowering adversaries with their words.[10] With this change from observation to participation in place, to be an orator meant both to accept and issue symbolic challenges.[11] It also meant to engage in the production and critique of rhetoric, a kind of verbal combat in which no point of view remained unopposed for long. It meant that a prevalent argument was prevalent not because of its historical status or its compelling logic but because it had been tested by and withstood the attacks of the opposing side(s). Importantly, one of the criticisms of the sophists is that a "both sides" style of teaching is not a good way to impart virtue or ethics to students or listeners.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=33#oembed-3*

The sophists also lived in an *oral* culture and at a time of emergent *literate* culture.[12] Oral cultures refer to cultures that spread knowledge primarily by way of the spoken word and whose techniques of communication and memory are centered upon the delivering of speeches used for (for instance) trials, commemoration, legislation, and the recording of history.

(1) Orality describes a mode of information transmission that primarily occurs through *speech*. It has the following characteristics:

- **Orality is Low-fidelity.** This means that information is passed around like a game of "telephone." As information is passed around from person to person, the transmitted knowledge is not identical to the source.
- **Orality is a means of Information Storage and Transmission**: Mnemonic devices, meter, and rhyme are ways of recording and remembering information. Poetry is not just a way of making speech eloquent; it was a functional way of ensuring that the past carried forward into the future.
- **Orality is a Social Function of Memory**: telling history is an entertainment event, and public speaking is a shared public ritual. Ancient Greek plays, like Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, had a similar function of entertainment and were consistently organized around the "chorus," an audience to

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9. Jaeger, Werner. Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, 303-310.
10. Plato. Protagoras. Project Gutenberg (335a); Plato. Hippias Minor. Project Gutenberg. (363c-364a).
11. Diels, Hermann, and Rosamund Kent Sprague. The Older Sophists. Hackett Publishing Company, 1972, p. 82.
12. Ong, Walter and John Hartley, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. New York: Routledge, 2012.

the play that was also a participant to the play, which would act as a kind of moral conscience, spelling out the 'lesson' for the attending audience.

(2) Literacy describes a mode of information transmission that primarily occurs through *writing*. It has the following characteristics:

- **Literacy is High-Fidelity.** This means that the transmission of knowledge became significantly more consistent from one telling to another because literacy enables the copying of one text repeatedly. For example, Homeric epics like the Iliad and the Odyssey begin in an oral culture, where they were much more variable, changing between different tellings. With literate culture, these stories became "rigidified" in form and content and more consistent in their different 'parts.'
- **Literacy makes possible the inscription of laws:** writing allows for the codification of a common code that is now generally enforceable. It also makes mercantile relationships and the inscription of fixed laws possible using ledgers and established legal codes.
- **Literacy increases social emphasis upon *logos* or 'the word' as a fixed and unchanging object:** *"logos"* literally means both 'the word' and 'reasoning,' which writing allows audiences to inspect, review and consider over a longer stretch of time than just the performance. When Socrates writes about literacy in the *Phaedrus,* he is critical of it because it means that words suddenly have a life beyond their authors and that the "dead letter" may be picked up and examined by people who have no understanding of the word and how it is tailored to the soul of the listener. This may also be related to the fact that the sophists distributed handbooks of their teachings, meaning that any literate person might be able to make strong arguments without necessarily considering the weight or consequences of their arguments. Plato also argues against writing in general because it makes memory unnecessary; it will install "forgetting," he says, because it makes the soul lazy, reducing its need for recollection. Given that we are at the beginning of a digital era ourselves, you might be able to think of similar criticism about "millennial" or "zoomer" online culture today.

Resemblance: The Sophist's Epistemology

The word "epistemology" refers to "the study of knowledge." Split into its Greek roots, epistemology combines *episteme* (knowledge) + *logos* (reason or logic). When we talk about epistemology today, it most often means "how we know what we know." The scientific method is an example of *epistemology*: it is a way of knowing what we know about the surrounding natural world. When we say "the sophist's epistemology," we are asking the following question: what did the sophists know, and how did they know it?

Generally speaking, the ancient Greeks gathered knowledge in a very different way from how we think of it today. They relied on a foundational concept of *resemblance,* in which a fundamental association between

dissimilar objects revealed something true about the world.[13] One example is how the ancient Greeks associated walnuts with healing the human head. The walnut resembles the brain with a hard exterior and a folded interior and resembles the cerebrum's appearance. For the sophists, the visual resemblance between objects in the natural world dictated an important or essential connection between them.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=33#oembed-4

Another example of resemblance is how the ancient Greeks associated the lives of animals, humans, and the Gods. The actions of humans mirrored actions that occurred among the gods; other times, animals displayed characteristics that resembled the characteristics of men. The quality of _metis_, or cunning intelligence, was a kind of knowledge gotten from resemblance.[14] *Metis* was a trait displayed by animals like octopi and foxes, who were capable of making traps and laying in hiding until the right moment. That was *metis*: an ability to look beyond the situation or envision the opportune moment before it happened. But a person, animal, or god could also use their metis to blend into the background or wait until just the right moment arrived. Among the gods, metis allowed the gods always to be outmaneuvering one another, inventing strategies to get the best of their opponents.

As rhetoric, metis allowed people to seize the right moment through the gift of foresight. As important as what to say was when to say it and to anticipate the moment at which speech was both appropriate and effective. This foresight might dictate when to speak or when not to speak, disguising oneself with words like an octopus changes their appearance. This intelligent foresight amounts to "knowledge" in Greek thought because it was possessed by animals, humans, and the gods. The way these worlds mirror one another offers an example of how the Greeks thought in deeply rhetorical terms, namely, by transforming resemblances into apparent knowledge of the world.

Plato's definition of *rhetoric* in *Gorgias*[15] is an object lesson in Greek resemblance. To define what rhetoric *is,* Plato has use resemblances. In other words, he has to compare the art of rhetoric to other arts that either are — or are not — *similar* to it. According to Plato, there are four "true" arts of bodily health and four "lesser" arts considered to be their counterfeit reflections. Rhetoric is one of the allegedly "lesser" arts. All of the arts "resemble" one another to the extent that they improve health or create a false impression of health.

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13. Foucault, Michel. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
14. Detienne, Marcel and Jean-Pierre Vernat. Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society. Atlantic Highlands: Harvester Press, 1978.
15. Plato. Gorgias. Project Gutenberg. (464b-465e).

The different categories also reflect each other because in each case, Plato's argument builds from arts that are for the *individual body* to arts that are for a *collective body-politic*:

- *Gymnastics*, which improves the health of the (individual) body.
- *Medicine*, which improves health by rehabilitating the (individual) body.
- *Legislation*, which improves the health of the (collective) body-politic.
- *Justice*, which improves health by rehabilitating the (collective) body-politic.

The lesser arts are about appearances rather than truth. He calls rhetoric a 'knack,' not even a true art, and states that it "flatters" and "impersonates" the art of justice. These lesser arts give the human body and the body-politic what it desires, but not what it needs to survive.

- *Cosmetics*, which creates the illusion of (individual) bodily health.
- *Cookery*, which makes food to (individual) taste, but not for rehabilitation.
- *Sophistry,* which creates the illusion of legislative competence for the (collective) body-politic.
- *Rhetoric,* which creates the illusion of serving justice for the (collective) body-politic.

These four arts are the mirror image of the first four. They resemble each other because they are all "corrupt" in related ways. Plato ends his criticism by referencing the resemblance between "cookery" and "rhetoric": Why should we mistrust the sophist? "What I say rhetoric is, then – you've heard it. It corresponds to cookery, doing in the soul what cookery does in the body." The reason to dismiss rhetoric is that it resembles cookery: it tastes good but won't make you well.

The sophists also developed their own methods for knowledge-making through what we would call a "switch-sides" debate. According to the sophist Protagoras, one could only truly know an argument if they could argue both sides of the case.[16] For that reason, the sophistic instruction called the *dissoi logoi*, or "opposed reason," is typically attributed to Protagoras. The *dissoi logoi* claims the ability to "make the weaker argument [into] the stronger [one]" and is grounded in the presumption of humankind's total ignorance of what happens in the celestial or heavenly realm. According to Protagoras, "one cannot know the gods." The examples provided in the dissoi logoi include "the good and the bad," asking questions like "are they the same or not?" and "on proper and shameful taste," asking the question, "can the same thing be [in good taste] and [also] shameful?" This attention to "both-side-ism" is also one way that the Greek context strongly resembles our own; it is one of the reasons that the philosopher Plato provides for strongly disliking the sophists and for his belief that they have nothing to offer except for lies and illusions.

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16. Protagoras. Dissoi Logoi.

The Encomium of Helen

The *Encomium of Helen,* written by the sophist Gorgias, offers one way to understand the sophists' way of understanding rhetoric to create or constitute social reality.[17] Sometimes, the sophists' creation of a shared fantasy is described as a "deception" because the speaker misleads the audience into believing false information. Other scholars have claimed that what the sophists did was not "deception," but rather that they "[placed] all possible representations of reality on equal epistemological footing," creating the opportunity to compare different kinds of knowledge.[18]

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=33#oembed-5*

Why did it ever occur to Gorgias that Helen was in need of a speech in which she would be "rescued"? As described in the video above, this belief stemmed from the common and misogynistic belief among the ancient Greeks that Helen had caused the Trojan war. Many attributed the start of the war specifically to the fact that Helen, wife to Menelaus, had been taken by Paris of Troy immediately after the Trojans and Greeks had signed a peace treaty. It is a suspicious rumor for many reasons. When the Greeks went to war, in other words, it was not the war-making Menelaus – or even Helen's kidnapper, Paris — who are most often held responsible. Instead, the Greeks conferred blame on the kidnapped Helen. The encomium of Helen is the sophist Gorgias's spoken challenge to this common story. He writes the following:

> *"either by will of fate and decision of the gods and vote of Necessity did she [Helen] do what she did,*
> *or by force reduced*
> *or by words seduced*
> *or by love possessed."*

In other words, Helen "left" Greece because the gods made it so, because she was forced to, because Paris seduced her, or because the madness of love possessed her. Of course, if the Encomium of Helen "rescues" Helen from this blame, it's important to note that it does so in a way that is itself deeply misogynistic because it reduces her freedom or agency. By Gorgias' account, Helen is passive and cannot assume responsibility for

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17. Gorgias. The Encomium of Helen.
18. Consigny, Scott Porter. Gorgias: Sophist and Artist. Studies in Rhetoric/communication. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001, pp. 58-59.

a path she could not have chosen. Helen is redeemed, in his eyes, because she can be made a non-agent; she cannot be responsible for her actions because her only option was to acquiesce to more powerful forces.

According to Gorgias's reasoning, if the speech can rescue Helen, it also illustrates how speech (and rhetoric) can create a shared social reality, moving people toward a new common sense.

> *Sacred incantations sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of the incantation is wont to beguile it and persuade it and alter it by witchcraft. There are have been discovered two arts of witchcraft and magic: one consists of errors of soul and the other of deceptions of opinion. All who have and do persuade people of things do so by molding a false argument.*
>
> *To understand that persuasion, when added to speech, is wont also to impress the soul as it wishes, one must study: first, the words of astronomers who, substituting opinion for opinion, taking away one but creating another, make what is incredible and unclear seem true to the eyes of opinion; then, second, logically necessary debates in which a single speech, written with art but not spoken with truth, bends a great crowd and persuades, and third, the verbal disputes of philosophers in which the swiftness of thought is also shown making the belief in an opinion subject to easy change. The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion.*

The final segments of the speech unify the audience with Helen by drawing a parallel between their supposed intoxication with Gorgias' speech. 'Being persuaded by speech' is made 'unfortunate,' a decision imposed rather than chosen. If persuaded by Gorgias' own claim to non-truth, the audience must accede to the claim that Helen herself was constructed falsely, or misconstrued, in Homer's familiar narrative.

Additional Resources

- Bender, John, and David E. Wellbery. "Rhetoricality: On the modernist return of rhetoric." *The ends of rhetoric: History, theory, practice* 27 (1990).
- Farenga, Vincent. "Periphrasis on the Origin of Rhetoric." *MLN* 94.5 (1979): 1033-1055.
- Flores, Lisa A. "Between abundance and marginalization: The imperative of racial rhetorical criticism." *Review of Communication* 16.1 (2016): 4-24.
- Foley, Megan. "Peri Ti?: Interrogating Rhetoric's Domain." *Philosophy & rhetoric* 46.2 (2013): 241-246.
- Jarratt, Susan, and Rory Ong. "Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology." *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* 1995 (1995): 9-24.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On truth and lies in a nonmoral sense." *Truth: Engagements across philosophical traditions* (2005): 14-25.
- Schiappa, Edward. "Rhêtorikê: What's in a name? Toward a revised history of early Greek rhetorical theory." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78.1 (1992): 1-15.

CHAPTER 3: PROPAGANDA AND THE COMMON GOOD

This chapter addresses propagandistic persuasion and ideas related to civic virtue. The first section covers deception, a distant Greek relative to the concept of propaganda, as well as how Greek history has been used as a destructive form of propaganda in American history. The second section addresses how rhetoric was thought to be opposed to common well-being (or civic virtue) as well as how certain ideas related to civic virtue became a part of early theories of rhetoric.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: The Propaganda of History (Audio, ~20m)
- Part 2: The Common and the Good (Audio, ~20m)

Read this Next

- Mirhady, David C., and Yun Lee Too. "Against the Sophists." *Isocrates I*. Vol. 4. University of Texas Press, 2000, pp. 61-66.
- Critchley, Simon. *Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us*. Vintage, 2020.

Part 1: The Propaganda of History

The phrase "The Propaganda of History" is the title of a chapter of W.E.B Dubois's Black Reconstruction in America. As Dubois explains, it is important to recount history truthfully and as fully as possible. This is because history, told untruthfully, may be put in service of dangerous beliefs, naïve idealism, and the idea that our history is continuous with only positive developments. These, Dubois says, are pitfalls of telling history "unscientifically" or inaccurately.

> If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with that accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics in research and interpretation. If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history either as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish. It is propaganda like this that has led men in the past to insist that history is 'lies agreed upon'; and to point out the danger in such misinformation. It is indeed extremely doubtful if any permanent benefit comes to the world through such action. Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable?[1]

Ancient Greek Storytelling as "Deception"

One aspect of Ancient Greek history, especially as told by the Ancient Greeks, is that it blurs the line between fiction and what Dubois would call the "scientific" account of past events, which renders the with past clear and concrete evidence. With the grand, epic poems, such as those commemorating the Trojan War, details might change from speaker to speaker while retaining the pivotal moments: Helen, the horse, Achilles.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-1*

See also: "Diary of the guy who drove the big horse back from Troy," *The New Yorker,* August 2021

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1. Du Bois, W. E. B., and ProQuest. Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880. Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 714.

As Simon Critchley, author of *Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us,* explains, the knowledge that such stories communicated was more critical than a faithful retelling. That's why Critchley says that *tragedy* is an invention and an institution; it served a function *then* that we cannot relate to today insofar as it was a way to create shared stories and community. That's also why he says it's *anachronistic* and *self-consciously fictional*; it is out-of-sequence, and the details never seem to stay the same. Especially consistent in Greek tellings of history and poetry were tragic knowledge and the ruse of deception. According to Gorgias, author of Helen's *Encomium*, tragedy creates "a deception in which the deceiver is more honest than the non-deceiver, and the deceived is wiser than the non-deceived." Today, we would consider that position categorically immoral, in part because it is possible to have a truthful rendering of history. Often, the tragedy of history surpasses the tragedy of fictional events. But, among the Greeks, history was self-evidently a fiction or propaganda: an engaging story designed to teach a lesson.

When I say that the Ancient Greeks thought of history *as* tragedy and a story that teaches a lesson, it also tells us something about the play *Oedipus Rex*, which Critchley also describes and is sometimes synonymous with "Greek tragedy."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-2

An animated 11-minute retelling of the plot of Oedipus Rex. TW: Graphic Themes, Violence, Incest

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-3

The author of "The Fault in Our Stars" discusses Oedipus Rex. 14 minutes.

The point of *Oedipus Rex* is that the audience is always "in" on the information that fate will reveal to the main character, namely Oedipus's family of origin. In effect, when Oedipus learns his last name he also discovers the crimes he has committed against his own family. When Critchley describes how Oedipus "doesn't hear what is said to him and doesn't see what is in front of his eyes," it is because the audience is there, hearing and seeing him ignore a lesson that is very obvious to everyone else who is watching the play.

The point of tragedy is the lesson: to witness how a person may go through life with the truth in front of them, unable to see it. For the audience, the point is to learn how to rid ourselves of Oedipus's kind of stunted perception. By allowing ourselves to be "deceived" – suspending disbelief or pretending as if the fictional actions on stage were real – tragedy allows us to learn something about ourselves. By watching

tragic knowledge dawn on a fictional someone else, the audience becomes more able to anticipate moments when tragic knowledge dawns upon *them*, to change how they act, and to handle such moments with greater courage.

Ultimately, that is what Critchley and Gorgias mean when they celebrate rhetoric as "a deception in which the deceiver is more honest than the non-deceiver, and the deceived is wiser than the non-deceived." By watching the fictional story unfold, the audience may learn something by pretending that the represented events really happened.

Classical Greece as Propaganda about Democracy

I want to turn to two examples of how Ancient Greek history can be – and has been – used more literally as propaganda in the contemporary sense. A first example is classical iconography and architecture supporting a white telling of history and racist institutions. As Carl J. Richard explains:

> "when the history and imagery of ancient Athens finally achieved popularity in the United States, that popularity, at least in the South, was based partly on its social inequalities."[2]

In other words, in the United States, classical Greece has offered a popular myth that supported American racism. Comparing the United States to ancient Greece showed how deep social inequalities had always coexisted with democracy; not because the Greeks had finally overcome these problems. Affluent white Americans, seeking to emulate the Greeks, identified fully with this vision of the past and present.

For example, when Greek history, culture, and architecture became a mainstay in the pre-Reconstruction American South, "most abolitionists responded by arguing that slavery had been the greatest flaw of Athens and the other classical republics." There is, in fact, a direct connection between how "the advocates of slavery viewed Athens as an ideal society" and the present-day glorification of warlike Greek city-states like Sparta. Sarah E. Bond writes that ancient Greek culture has, even in recent years, been a source of deeply coded and racist beliefs about, for instance, eugenics and immigration policy:

> Not all modern depictions are accurate illustrations of Sparta, however. While the movie 300 focuses on the fight for Greek liberty in the conflict with Persia in the early 5th century BCE, it also neglects to tell the audience that Sparta also took liberty from others. Sparta was a slave society dependent on unfree workers, called helots, who were tied to the land to work the fields. They were not chattel slaves (i.e. they were not the property of the Spartans), but were still unable to leave or to participate as citizens. The use and abuse of helots is what allowed

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2. Richard, Carl J. The Golden Age of the Classics in America Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Spartan citizens the time to train — at least until 371 BCE, when Sparta was defeated by Thebes at the Battle of Leuktra.[3]

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3. Bond, Sarah E. "This Is Not Sparta: Why the Modern Romance With Sparta Is a Bad One," Eidolon Journal May 7, 2018.

Bond highlights the film 300 as an especially problematic source of beliefs regarding the glorification of Greeks' warlike culture. Like the adoption of Greek iconography in the pre-Reconstruction American South, the infatuation with Sparta may transmit a desire for violence. As Bond argues, adopting an image of oneself or the nation as the defensive and warlike "Spartan" may reflect a greater national obsession with racist or xenophobic violence.

Platonic Propaganda: The Allegory of the Cave

A final way that Ancient Greece intersects with familiar ideas related to "propaganda" is Plato's famous "Allegory of the Cave," presented in Book VII of the *Republic*. Although he does not speak explicitly about *rhetoric* or the *sophists* in this passage, he does say that the people trapped in the cave are "no different from us." Although "us" is addressed to himself and his companion, Glaucon, it is reason enough to reflect on how or whether the *Allegory* remains a relevant story today.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-4*

Imagine people living in a cavernous cell down under the ground; at the far end of the cave, a long way of, there's an entrance open to the outside world. They've been there since childhood, with their legs and necks tied up in a way which keeps them in one place and allows them to look only straight ahead, but not to turn their heads. There's firelight burning a long way further up the cave behind them, and up the slope between the fire and the prisoners there's a road, beside which you should imagine a low wall has been built – like the partition conjurors place between themselves and their audience and above which they show their tricks.

Imagine also that there are people on the other side of this wall who are carrying all sorts of artefacts. These artefacts, human statuettes, and animal models carved in stone and wood and all kinds of materials stick out over the wall; and as you'd expect, some of the people talk as they carry these objects along, while others are silent.

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" explores the nature of knowledge and its proper objects. The world we perceive through the senses, Socrates argues, is illusory and deceptive because it depends on a realm of separately existing Forms organized beneath the Form of Good. Forms are the ideal or highest possible organization of an object. They are not accessible through the senses but only through rigorous philosophical discussion and mathematical reasoning. Measuring, counting, and weighing all bring us closer to the realm of Forms than poetry. All art can only mimic or create inferior representations of the true Forms. Rhetoric especially can only lead further away from the truth into a world of illusion and deception. As a general explanation for how

"deception" and "illusion" are still basic functions of rhetoric, how else might we update the allegory of the cave for our present moment?

Part 2: The Common and the Good

If there are valuable ideas drawn from Ancient Greek thinking about rhetoric, one place to look would be the terms "common" and "good." Although we would be hard-pressed to translate the terms *topos,* or 'commonplace,' and *eudaimonia*, or 'flourishing' as "common good," each of these roots teaches us something about the art of speaking well and the kinds of goals that this art may have.

Topos refers to a "commonplace," a site or location, most often invoked in speech, that is cited to be recognizable to a large audience. "Helen of Troy" would have been commonplace in ancient Athens because audiences would have known who this person was when a speaker would bring them up. *Topoi* are essential to rhetoric. Without some shared sense of what the speaker and audience are discussing, communication cannot happen. Communication between a speaker and an audience relies on translating experience. The speaker has to tell the audience that they know and understand their experience to be credible or worthy of attention. The audience has to recognize some aspect of their own experience in what the speaker is saying. That site of mutual recognition, the place of commonality, is a *topos.* The plural of *topos* is *topoi. Topoi* allow us to compose writing and imagine speeches because they put us in the frame of mind where we have to consider what is similar between us and our imagined audience.

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A five minute description of eudaimonia and ancient Greek philosophical debates over it.

Eudaimonia refers to "flourishing" and is sometimes translated as "the good life" or "happiness" as a principle of morality. The Greek term "*eudaimon*" is composed of two parts: "*eu*" means "well," and "*daimon*" means "divinity" or "spirit." Therefore, to be eudaimon is to live in a way that is well-favored by a god. But Aristotle never calls attention to this etymology in his ethical writings, and it seems to have little influence on his thinking. It means the attainment of one's highest self and an orientation toward the preservation of life. For Aristotle, *Eudaimonia* is the greatest end for man collectively and individually.

One task of this class is how to construct, create, and imagine better pro-social rhetorics or better practices of communication that could stand in place of those we are trying to criticize or place in context. That is the function and purpose of drawing attention to the words *topos* and *eudaimonia*, which allow us to think about

what kinds of commonplaces we must draw upon in our political rhetoric *today;* and how that rhetoric must be oriented toward human flourishing, in the sense of confronting social problems and charting a better way.

Why was Isocrates "Against the Sophists"?

Let's turn now to Athenian philosopher *Isocrates*. A first and frequent question is whether Isocrates is the same person as Socrates. The answer is *no.* Socrates was Plato's teacher and is featured as the main character in Plato's dialogues. Isocrates was a teacher of rhetoric at about the same time that Aristotle was a figure in Athenian life. Isocrates taught speech but did so in a way that he designed to support the Athenian city-state. He is significant because his idea of "the common good" was service to the state and its institutions.

[Classical Rhetoric Timeline](#) by Bridie McGreavy

Isocrates was born in Athens in 436 and remained there until his death at the age of 97. His career spans Plato's lifetime, the great Athenian orators of the late fifth century, and most of the fourth century. When Aristotle opened his school at the Lyceum, he found himself in competition with Isocrates for the best minds of the Athenian youth, and there is evidence that he was acutely aware of that fact. Isocrates' works "were clearly intended to provide a model of eloquence he held to be so crucial in the conduct of public affairs. More than that, they were the vehicles for his notion of the true "philosophy," in which wisdom in civic affairs emphasizing moral responsibility and equated with mastery of rhetorical technique.

Like Protagoras and Gorgias, Isocrates believed that human knowledge is limited. In every case, knowing

the right course of action is "one of the impossibilities of life" (Against the Sophists 2). He also says, "it is not in the nature of man to attain exact knowledge (episteme) by which, having it, we can discern clearly what we should do or say. ... [instead], those who are wise are those who are able by [changing public] opinion (doxa) to hit upon what is, for the most part, the best course of action." For Isocrates, rhetoric is a means to heal and nourish the collective. Sophistic rhetoric promised social mobility in the polis because it gave individuals the ability to 'make it' by speaking well in public.

Isocrates was very familiar with this. Maybe his most famous writing is the *Antidosis,* a word for a legal procedure that results in an exchange of property. If a citizen accepted the legal challenge of antidosis, the wealth of the loser would be transferred to the winner. Another Athenian, Megacleides, attacked Isocrates's character by raising some doubt about his teaching. Isocrates then wrote the *Antidosis* in response. It was his way of saying, "try and see what happens."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-6

Isocrates also believed that the art of oratory was a finished project — because the sophists had figured that much out. Isocrates's school had a term of study lasting three to four years. According to Isocrates, technical instruction should be supplemented by the speaker's own good moral character and involvement in public affairs, as would be fitting for the good citizen who possesses civic virtue (arete). This was a key charge against the sophists: they are irresponsible and bad teachers who swindle their students into knowing a handful of tricks. The sophist, by his account, teaches rhetoric "as simply as they would teach the letters of the alphabet, not having taken the trouble to examine the nature of each kind of knowledge." In Isocrates's words: "To obtain a knowledge of the elements out of which we make and compose all discourses is not so very difficult if anyone entrusts himself, not to those who make rash promises, but to those who have some knowledge of these things. But to choose from these elements those which should be employed for each subject, to join them together, to arrange them properly, and also, not to miss what the occasion demands but appropriately to adorn the whole speech with striking thoughts and melodious phrase — these things require much study and are the task of a vigorous and imaginative mind."

But little by little, as the Athenian empire began to crumble, Athens and its rhetoric were turning toward tyranny. When we get to Isocrates's historical moment, we should imagine an Athens yearning for days past. It is where education is born and is immediately merged with the interests of the city-state. Isocrates has a kind of politics that wants to push the state back on track and educates the people who will allow that kind of policy to come to life. On the other hand, Plato believes that it will take more than the most influential members of the *polis* to change the city-state's government. Until many people see the same sort of Truth, there can be no

state. The plans that Plato and Isocrates bring were, therefore, responses to the gloomy circumstances facing Athens. There is some dialogue between the two, but they are both after the same thing: drastic reform.

Aristotle, Pathos, and the Golden Mean

The last thing I want to talk about in this recording is the concept of *pathos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric.* Aristotle's concepts of "the good" and "flourishing" usually depend upon striking a balance or harmony between extremes. This is the basis both for Aristotle's system of virtue ethics and his rhetorical theory of *pathos,* which appears in his book, the *Rhetoric.*

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is an important source for many definitions of rhetoric that are still in use today. He defines rhetoric as "the counterpart of dialectic," or an art that supports the philosophical testing and creation of true knowledge. By his account, rhetoric is both an art of persuasion and a mode of observation. By defining rhetoric as "the faculty of observing/the available means of persuasion/in any given situation," Aristotle explains that rhetoric deals with changing conditions of public influence and that it deals with *common* knowledge, with the way a speaker draws upon *topoi* or commonplaces, to both observe and create compelling speech.

The *Rhetoric* offers a systematic explanation of what rhetoric is and how a rhetor may use it. For that reason, it reads a bit like a VCR manual, a set of instructions for an ancient machine. In *Rhetoric, we* encounter the terms *logos, pathos,* and *ethos* – in that order. *Logos,* which describes the speaker's choice of "words," their reasoning, argument, and arrangement, is by far the most privileged term in Aristotle's work. Historically, it has received the greatest share of attention. In this section, Aristotle declares that logical forms of argument, including the syllogism and the enthymeme, have not been nearly considered enough. These "forms" have been important for the study of, for instance, mathematical and symbolic logic, as well as modern forms of debate and argumentation.

The topic of *pathos* is a bit different. This "chapter" of the rhetoric has separate sections for distinct emotional pairings like anger and mildness. *Pathos* is usually understood as the "appeal to emotion," which creates the impression that a speaker is trying to generate a specific feeling in an audience, for instance, to make them sad or make them laugh. But that is not the same thing as pathos. The object of rhetoric is to produce judgment in the hearers. For that purpose, the 'demonstration' of logos, or reason, alone is insufficient to produce conviction. The speaker must produce within the judge a particular frame of mind receptive to the judgment. Pathos, therefore, refers to the disposition of hearers concerning judgments that cause them pleasure or pain. "For Aristotle, the principles that govern emotional excitation can be examined completely apart from the contexts in which real orators had produced specific passions."

Pathos gives the speaker the job of knowing the extremes of their audience's emotions. Knowing where their audience already is, *pathos* is the waxing and waning of these emotions, with well-known extremes. For instance, anger and mildness mean that the speaker's ability to observe may allow them to make an angry audience get angrier. Alternatively, the speaker may seek to cool their hot tempers. Mildness is "the quieting

and appeasing of anger." The admission that one is worthy of punishment tends to defuse anger, since "we punish more severely those who contradict us and deny their offense, but cease to be angry with those who admit that they are justly punished. Aristotle writes, "to deny what is evident is disrespect, and disrespect is slight and contempt."

This movement between the 'extremes' makes pathos resemble Aristotle's notion of virtue ethics. This concept, sometimes also casually referred to as "the golden mean," similarly seeks a point of balance between two "extremes" of behavior as the correct or most virtuous course of action.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=70#oembed-7

Ultimately, Aristotle helps us understand steering the emotions requires a unique skill set because speech allows the speaker to move *collective* emotions. Speeches do not just affect us individually; they can urge a group of people to action. When contemporary scholars of rhetoric Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites theorize *public emotion*, they make similar assumptions. A public, like a person, can experience emotions, but these emotions support that group or collective in ways that are different from individual wellbeing. For the public, emotions may foster participation, identification with leaders or the nation and calls for more-or-less inclusive norms of citizenship. Like Aristotle, however, they set public emotion apart from rationalization, maintaining the traditional separation of *logos* and *pathos*.

Introducing Rhetoric in the 20th Century

Between 1914 and 1917, Rhetoric departments were new in the United States. These departments were unique from other disciplines because they studied *speech* instead of a literary canon, and sought to define themselves apart from English departments. The argument that the early students of rhetoric made in the United States was that the study of speeches deserved to be considered apart from the study of literature. Literature might impart social values, but speeches were a reflection of the values of the speaker. At the very least, speech constituted a very specific kind of literature that required its own independent consideration. Members of the early "Cornell School" of rhetoric included James Wichelns, Alexander Drummond, Harry Kaplan, Evertt Lee Hunt, to name just a few.

Over time, Rhetoric and Speech Communication departments spread across the United States, primarily housed in major public universities. These departments were among the first to study rhetoric as communication. Even today public speaking courses are predominantly housed within Communication

Studies departments in public universities around the country. Graduates of the Cornell department carried speech communication to doctoral institutions and small colleges across the country.

One prominent example of the kind of criticism that these early departments performed is Herbert Wichelns' "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," an essay that has been widely reprinted and is clearly one of the starting points for the 20th-century rhetorical criticism. This essay argued that classifying oratory and other modes of public persuasive discourse as literature was to completely miss the point. Instead, these speeches reflected the political priorities of the time and reflected a unique kind of invention on the part of the speaker. To analyze these speeches, many early speech communication professors drew upon Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* which they argued contained a set of principles by which effective and persuasive speech could take place. Speeches either did or did not conform to Aristotelian principles, and rhetorical criticism consisted in explaining how these persuasive concepts were brought to life by a speaker. This framework of analysis was called *neo-Aristotelianism*

Scholars like Wichelns also argued that speech and oratory deserved consideration as a unique subject of study. According to Wichelns, oratory was also concerned which own says with permanent values and ideas that endure beyond the historical moment. Even in the present, the endurance of these values is evident because speeches are still intelligible to present-day audiences.

Writing some time after Wichelns was Ernest Wrage. His focus was significantly more on the *history* of speeches and telling a history of ideas using speech as the primary evidence. According to Wrage, the study of speeches should not be focused on just the techniques of persuasion or dissecting a speech for its basic Aristotelian elements, but telling history with a rhetorical sensibility, drawing upon individual speeches in chronological sequence. Rhetorical criticism is specifically the investigation that uncovers a common public attitude. Wrage is one of the first who organizes American political speeches according to genre, theme, and debates.

Additional Resources

- Mirhady, David C., and Yun Lee Too. "Against the Sophists." *Isocrates I.* Vol. 4. University of Texas Press, 2000, pp. 61-66.
- Critchley, Simon. *Tragedy, the Greeks, and us.* Vintage, 2020.

CHAPTER 4: THE SYMBOL

A collection of symbols. Pixabay.

This chapter covers the concept of the symbol. The first portion of this chapter defines the symbol and presents several philosophies of language developed in the 20th century by Kenneth Burke, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Sanders Peirce. Important concepts from these philosophies/philosophers include *identification, the "I" and the "me,"* and the *icon, index, and symbol.* The second part of this chapter addresses Burke's framework of "Rhetoric as Symbolic Action," discussing *the terministic screen, the dramatistic pentad,* and *demagoguery.*

Please note that some of the written materials (specifically, the section on *icon, index,* and *symbol*) presented in this chapter do not appear in the same order as in the official recording for the class. Also included in the textbook below (but not in the recordings) are written descriptions and YouTube videos about early 20th-century American propagandists. This added material is useful context for symbols as 20th-century American propaganda, but it also provides more detail than is presented in the recordings.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: <u>What are Symbols?</u> (Video, ~40m)
- Part 2: <u>Rhetoric as Symbolic Action</u> (Video, ~35m)

Read this Next

- Burke, Kenneth. <u>"Definition of Man."</u> *The Hudson Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, Hudson Review, Inc, 1963, pp. 491–514.
- Solomon, Martha. <u>"The rhetoric of dehumanization: An analysis of medical reports of the Tuskegee syphilis project."</u> *Western journal of speech communication* 49.4 (1985): 233-247.

Part 1: What are Symbols?

The concept of "the symbol" comes from an ancient Greek word, "symbolon," which is the union of the words "thrown" and "together." The ancient use of the word "symbol" had an important social function: they were objects that represented a pact, treaty, or agreement between people and the state. Receiving a "symbolon" was more than receiving a gift or a token: they indicated the presence of a specific relationship between an individual and an institution. This chapter continues this line of reasoning by considering the kinds of relationships created by prominent symbols in the 20th century. This section covers the concept of *identification,* different 20th-century *theories of the symbol,* and continues an ongoing discussion about dangerous *propaganda* from the previous chapter.

Kenneth Burke and Identification through Rhetoric

Between 1939 and 1945, Kenneth Burke's theories of identification and symbolic action changed the study of rhetoric by bringing new attention to the powerful effects of speech. Rhetoric and rhetoricians adopt a new framework that considers rhetoric to be a mode of *symbolic action*, in which speech is primarily understood to unify and divide a mass public. Whereas rhetorical scholarship had previously concerned itself with effective persuasion, Burke introduces the idea of *identification*. As persuasion, rhetoric happens in or as a speech and relies upon the speaker's conscious choices, their historical circumstances, and the timeliness of the moment. As identification, rhetoric is about *influence*. It concerns communicating a meaning that reflects something that the audience shares with the speaker and other listeners.

In other words, identification is a way of talking about rhetoric as collectivizing, or as creating the audiences that it addresses. It is about bringing people together using *symbols*. When we identify with or around a symbol, we may come to share a similar system of values, assessment of social hierarchy, and rules of communication. The symbol is how we make not just any meaning but a *shared* meaning that we all hold in common. A related concept is *consubstantiality*, or the creation of sameness or likeness between different members of a group. Identification is not just about persuading with the right words. It encourages us to think about groups coming together around a symbol, how it moves the group, and how this symbol comes to mean something similar for everyone within it.

📊 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-1*

 X Gonzalez's March 24, 2018 Speech at the "March for Our Lives" Rally. An Example of Identification.

The speech above offers a good example of identification. The silence that spans the majority of the recording symbolizes the school shooting that [X Gonzalez](#) experienced for the gathered audience. The silence in this speech creates shared meaning with which this audience may identify. Identification does not happen all at once, however. Gonzalez begins the speech with the following statement:

> Six minutes and about twenty seconds. In a little over six minutes, seventeen of our friends were taken from us, fifteen were injured and everyone, absolutely everyone in the Douglas community was forever altered. Everyone who was there understands. Everyone who has been touched by the cold grip of gun violence understands. For us, long, tearful, chaotic hours in the scorching afternoon sun were spent not knowing. No one understood the extent of what had happened. No one could believe that there were bodies in that building waiting to be identified for over a day. No one knew that the people who are missing had stopped breathing long before any of us had even known that a code red had been called. No one could comprehend the devastating aftermath or how far this would reach or where this would go.

For those who still can't comprehend because they refuse to, I'll tell you where it went, right into the ground, six feet deep. Six minutes and twenty seconds with an AR-15 and my friend Carmen would never complain to me about piano practice. Aaron Feis would never call Kiera Ms. Sunshine. Alex Schachter would never walk into school with his brother Ryan. Scott Beigel would never joke around with Cameron at camp. Helen Ramsey would never hang out after school with Max. Do you know Montalto would never wave to her friend Liam at lunch? Joaquin Oliver would never play basketball with Sam or Dylan. Alaina Petty would never, Carol Lungren would never, Chris Hixon would never, Luke Hoyer would never, Martin Duque Anguiano would never. Peter Wang would never, Alyssa Alahdeff would never, Jamie Guttenberg would never, Meadow Pollick would never.

At that stage in the speech, Gonzalez pauses for the entire length of time that the students at Stoneman Douglas had to remain silent while an active shooter was in the building. Gonzalez's silence is uncomfortable for some listeners, who cheer and make noise as if encouraging them to speak.

Since the time that I came out here. It has been six minutes and 20 seconds. The shooter has ceased shooting and will soon abandon his rifle, blend in with the students as they escape, and walk free for an hour before arrest. Fight for your lives before it's someone else's job.

Identification describes the creation of a shared experience around the symbol. In this case, Gonzalez's symbol is silence. This silence, which disrupted the expectation that they would speak, represents Gonzalez's specific traumatic past experience, which also lasted six minutes and twenty seconds. Identification is clear in the discomfort and uncertainty of the audience during this long silence, simulating the disorientation characteristic of the event itself. Audiences – including its distant viewers on YouTube – come to identify with X because they come to understand the relationship between the speech and the scenario that the symbol represents.

Of course, identification does not always work. When this happens, it is called failed identification: when a meaning that a speaker wishes to share with a wider audience does not create the intended effect. During his 2012 US Presidential election campaign, Mitt Romney was widely criticized for using a false accent in his southern speeches. According to some critics, the former Massachusetts governor and US senator's choice to use a southern accent was an example of unsuccessful pandering:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-2

Mitt Romney's "Grits" Moment. An Example of Failed Identification.

As Romney's clip illustrates, disingenuous or inauthentic rhetoric may lead to effects of failed or (dis-)identification. The intent of this kind of speech may be to create an audience that shares the speaker's

understanding and worldview. However, a speaker who chooses symbols that challenge or their existing *ethos* also risks distancing themselves from their listeners.

In review, rhetoric emerges at the beginning of the 20th century as the study of public address, or as, again, the study of speeches and the systematic way they persuade. But at the same time, there's also a second notion about rhetoric that is emerging that rhetoric is a mode of identification, that it requires symbols that everyone interpreting the same way.

The Symbol and the Philosophy of Language

There are two early American philosophers of language who independently develop theories of the symbol. The first is George Herbert Mead, who coins the phrase symbolic interactionism. The second is Charles Sanders Peirce, who develops a theory of representation based on the *icon,* the *index,* and the *symbol.*

George Herbert Mead argues for a fundamental difference between "the I" and "the me" to explain how social expectations surrounding symbols are created. The "me" is the self that exists in relationship to a generalized, non-specific other. It is the generic response that I would expect from someone else when I execute a gesture or say a phrase. If "the me" says "how are you doing?" to a stranger on the street, they might expect them to say, "I'm fine, how are you?" or "none of your business!" depending on the customary expected response within that social environment.

The "I" describes individual reactions inflected with freedom and unpredictability. If "I" wave to someone on the street, I might (as "the me") expect them to wave back or acknowledge my hello. But the I is all of the actions that could happen: they could run up to me and confront me or suddenly run in the other direction. The sense of freedom that is characteristic of "the I" is, in this case, all of the different ways that this other person interprets my gesture differently or in a way that is opposed to the intention of the symbolic gesture I used to interact with them.

A second mid-20th-century philosopher of language who develops a theory of the symbol is Charles Sanders Peirce (pronounced "purse"). Peirce is the inventor of linguistic pragmatism, in which the meaning of an idea may be understood as the totality of possible observations about it. According to Peirce, meaning must have an actual value; it must be taken from empirical observations. This is "value" occurs in one of three registers: "firstness," "secondness," and "thirdness."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-3

Informational Video on Peirce's Philosophy of Language

Imagine thinking of nothing but the color blue, not thinking about the color or addressing questions about the experience. The idea would be to perceive one thing alone. This is Peirce's concept of firstness, the contemplation of the essential qualities of something, the color blue. But we cannot purely experienced this before some secondness (the sun, the landscape) a quality distinct from the blueness that you first perceived enters your consciousness. Perhaps something different or distinct from the original phenomenon, in relation to the foreground of background appears as a secondness. Perhaps it could be a sound. It could be another color or it might be an object that appears in the midst of that color. [It could be] something in a contrasting color that makes it distinguishable, that has characteristics, such as a shape. Finally, Perice recognized that what you experience in your mind is thirdness, the mediation of signs that occurs as a mental process of your experiences, thoughts or ideas. He called this an interpretant. An interpretant is a being with the potential to interpret signs [and who occupies the position of thirdness relative to firstness and secondness]

Signifier, Signified, Referent

Peirce employs three-part distinctions like *firstness, secondness,* and *thirdness* throughout his philosophy of language. One related framework is the distinction between the *signifier,* the *signified,* and the *referent.* The *signifier* is the graphic mark before it comes into contact with a specific meaning. It is also called the 'shape' of the word and the sound image. The *signified* is the meaning of the signifier, or the concept the word invokes. It is the ideational component of the word or the shared and similar thought that a word conjures for a person or people. Finally, the *referent* is the actual, literal object, which exists in the world.

For example, "the White House": the *signifier* is the phonemes and sounds that combine to form this phrase. The *signified* is what this phrase "means," such as the office of the American presidency that symbolizes the authority of the executive branch. Finally, the *referent* is the literal building or structure that exists in Washington D.C.

Icon, Index, Symbol

A final three-part distinction related to representation is the *icon,* the *index,* and the *symbol.*

An Icon: Rock Slide Warning Sign

The *icon* resembles its referent, the literal thing to which it refers. The image of rocks falling is an icon because the thing it warns us against, rocks falling, is represented as a literal depiction of rocks falling.

An Index: The 2021 Loma Fire outside of Santa Barbara

The *index* is associated with a referent by cause or inference. When we see an index, we can deduce what it means. An image of smoke in the distance means that there is a fire; reasoning rather than a natural resemblance gives away the meaning of the index.

A Symbol: A Biohazard Sign

Finally, the *symbol* is related to the referent by convention. The biohazard symbol means that there is radiation present. However, there is no natural resemblance between a biological hazard (such as radiation) and this symbol; this danger does not "look like" anything we can easily represent. Additionally, we cannot use reasoning or deduction to infer that the biohazard symbol means that radiation is present. The symbol does not, for instance, show what the effects of radiation might be, like the image of smoke. Instead, the symbol means "radiation" through convention, circulation, and use.

Icon   Index   Symbol

Here's another example, an image of a bicycle, a skull and crossbones, and the infinity symbol. The bicycle is an *icon* because it literally resembles the object. The skull and crossbones are an index because the audience may infer that consuming the object will lead to death. Finally, the final image, the leviathan cross, is a symbol because it does not refer specifically or reverentially to an object, and an audience cannot easily infer its meaning. Although it symbolizes protection and balance, this meaning is only attached to the symbol through convention and use.

A tree decorated with several Nazar Boncuk ("bon-juk") medallions

The final example of icon, index, and symbol is the **Nazar Boncuk**. It is an ornament that hangs in many homes to ward off the "evil eye"; many of you may have seen it or own them yourselves. It is an important example because it illustrates how the icon, the index, and the symbol can be part of a single object. It is an *icon* because the object resembles an eye. It is an index because, most often, when it is placed in a home, it hangs above the doorway as a message for guests: someone is always watching, so behave yourself as if you were being watched. Finally, it also has a symbolic value because its meaning is only learned by convention. When I grew up with this symbol in my home, I only realized that it was there as a symbol of protection because it was part of a story that was communicated to me by my family and which is part of a larger cultural tradition of hanging these symbols in homes. However, just seeing the symbol by itself doesn't necessarily communicate this shared, well-known meaning.

Symbols and 20th-Century Propagandists

The last bit of historical context about the symbol that I want to provide is political **propaganda** in the early 20th century. Propaganda is an important feature of the early 20th century that still lingers with us today. This time in the United States created a class of professional persuaders whose job was to create symbols and shared identifications on behalf of corporations and government. Several important figures for the history of propaganda in the United States are George Creel, Edward Bernays, and Walter Lippmann. Edward Bernays is widely regarded as one of the founders of the field of public relations.

(1) George Creel. Seven days after the United States entered World War I in April 1917, Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information, a propaganda agency acting to release government news, sustain morale in the US, administer voluntary press censorship, and develop propaganda abroad. Creel was named the head of the committee, and he created 37 distinct divisions, most notably the Division of Pictorial Publicity, the Four Minute Men Division, the News Division, and the Censorship Board.

The Division of Pictorial Publicity was staffed by hundreds of the nation's most talented artists. They created over 1000 designs for paintings, posters, cartoons, and sculptures that instilled patriotism, fear, and interest in the war efforts. Creel himself said that the images were "something that caught even the most indifferent eye." Between the News Division and Censorship Committee, Creel and the CPI could control the flow of official war information. Creel sought to portray facts without bias, though most pieces of news were "colored by nationalistic assumptions." Creel's committee may have produced biased news, but he hoped that the US could avoid rigid censorship during the war, as Creel's views on censorship were "expression, not repression." Under Creel's direction, the CPI sought to repress material that contained "dangerous" or "unfavorable" ideas to avoid demoralizing the population.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-4*

(2) Edward Bernays was born in Vienna, Austria. In 1891 Bernays's family moved to New York City. The nephew of Sigmund Freud, Bernays often consulted his uncle's work. He was the first to incorporate psychology and other social sciences into PR, yet where Freud sought to uncover motivations, Bernice sought to mobilize them. Bernie's clients were companies rather than individuals. In one instance, the American Tobacco Company asked him to expand sales. He responded with a campaign (see below) that marketed cigarettes as "torches of freedom" and sought to associate tobacco consumption with the women's suffrage movement.

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(3) During World War I **Walter Lippmann**, an American journalist, became an adviser to Woodrow Wilson and assisted in drafting Wilson's [Fourteen Points](#) speech. He sharply criticized George Creel, whom the President appointed to head wartime propaganda efforts at the Committee on Public Information. While he was prepared to curb his liberal instincts because of the war, saying he had "no doctrinaire belief in free speech," he nonetheless advised Wilson that censorship should "never be entrusted to anyone who is not himself tolerant, nor to anyone who is unacquainted with the long record of folly which is the history of suppression."

Lippmann examined the coverage of newspapers and saw many inaccuracies and other problems. He and Charles Merz, in a 1920 study entitled *A Test of the News*, stated that *The New York Times'* coverage of the [Bolshevik Revolution](#) was biased and inaccurate. In addition to his newspaper column "Today and Tomorrow," he wrote several books. He was also the first to bring the phrase "cold war" to a common currency in his 1947 book by the same name.

Lippman also argued that people, including journalists, are more apt to believe "the pictures in their heads" than to come to judgment by critical thinking. He wrote that humans condense ideas into symbols, and journalism, a force quickly becoming the mass media, is an ineffective method of educating the public. Even if journalists did better jobs of informing the public about important issues, Lippmann believed "the mass of the reading public is not interested in learning and assimilating the results of accurate investigation."

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Part 2: Rhetoric as Symbolic Action

Symbolic Action describes the construction of *social reality* through symbols that foster identification. If rhetoric-as-symbolic action is the expressive human use of symbols, then *social reality* is the reality that we perceive through symbols, as well as the rituals, habits, and practices that use symbols. Additionally, symbolic action must involve *identification* because symbols allow people to see themselves as a group based on common interests and characteristics. Groups may also be broken apart using symbols, for instance, by claiming that some group members hold on to symbols that threaten the whole group's identity. Symbolic action also occurs in public, out in the open. It means that symbols are leveraged to move people as a group to do things that they otherwise might not do. Symbols move people because they identify with them — because they see something at stake in protecting symbols and see similarity (or difference) in those who cling to them.

Let's place some firm definitions on this terminology, starting with Symbolic Action.

- **Symbolic Action** describes the making or construction of social reality through symbols that foster identification. It is expressive human action, the rhetorical mobilization of symbols to act in the world.
- **Rhetoric** is the use of symbolic action by human beings to share ideas, enabling them to work together to make decisions about matters of common concern and to construct social reality.
- A **rhetor** is any person, group, or institution that uses symbolic action.
- A **symbol** is an arbitrary representation of something else, a word, an image, or an artifact representing a thing, concept, or action. **Verbal Symbols** are symbols found in language, whether spoken or written. **Visual Symbols** are symbols that include pictures, images, objects, recordings, enactments, demonstrations, and other collective actions.
- **Identification**, finally, "is a communicative process through which people are unified into a whole based on common interests or characteristics." It is how symbolic action allows a rhetor to connect with the audience on a psychological level.

Kenneth Burke's theory of symbolic action revolves around his "definition of man." (see the additional readings for this week). Although the word "man" is both a dated and imprecise way to say "human," Burke's definition is significant because it defines the human in terms of their capacity to use symbols ("the symbol-using animal"). Burke points out that animals can understand symbols; birds, for example, interact with symbols regularly. Wrens use food as leverage to goad hatchlings to leave the nest. However, humans manipulate symbols to advance their own purposes and create social groups, which sets them apart.

Burke's "definition" has five parts. The first is that humans are symbol-using (and misusing) animals. As Burke writes,

> "What is our reality for today but all of this clutter of symbols about the past combined with whatever things we know mainly through maps, magazines, newspapers, and the like about the present. In school, as they go from class to class, students turn from one idiom (like mathematics or chemistry) to another (like Communication

Studies or Rhetoric). The various courses in the curriculum are in effect but so many different terminologies. And however important to us is the tiny sliver of reality each of us has experienced first-hand, the whole over-all 'picture' is but a construct of our symbol-systems."

Humans have the capacity to recognize symbols, but they also have the capacity to put them out into the world. They can use these symbols to destructive ends, and most often, substitute symbols for one another, such that a new symbol may carry on the work of an older one. The other aspects of this definition are important as well:

- **Inventor of the negative** refers to how symbols are exclusive; for example, a group of people may gather around a symbol like a religious text or a conspiracy theory while excluding others, making them the "negative" of their symbolization.
- The idea that humans are **separated from their natural conditions by instruments of their own making** symbol-use can delude a people; how we may become 'detached' from reality based on the stories we elect to read or the news that we choose to watch. It also recalls the famous Clausewitz quotation that "diplomacy is war carried out by other means," similarly, language allows for a kind of violence that sometimes stands in for acts of physical aggression.
- **Goaded by a spirit of hierarchy** refers to the tendency not only to separate other people who are not part of our same symbol system or social group but to think of groups in terms of relative importance or as more and less deserving of recognition or rights. It describes how humans put some principles, ideas, and even people 'first' and subordinate others to those in that category.
- The final part, **rotten with perfection**, describes how creating these hierarchical and exclusive orders is often the opposite of creating a 'perfect world.' The idea of American exceptionalism, for instance, that America is completely or wholly unlike any other country because it is 'perfect' in its ideals can be a way to legitimize oppressive laws or violent policing.

That brings us to Martha Solomon's Article on the "rhetoric of dehumanization," which discusses the misuse of symbols. Using Burke's concepts, Solomon argued that the Tuskegee progress reports, printed in major medical journals from 1936 to 1973, functioned as "rhetoric of dehumanization" (p. 231). Specifically, the symbols used in the report show how Black men were treated as less human than the scientists who were conducting the study. The scientists' "neutral" scientific language normalized inhuman practices of human testing, resulting in the deaths of patients who doctors never told that they were receiving placebos.

What was the Tuskegee Project? (from the CDC's webpage documenting the Tuskegee Project) In 1932, the Public Health Service, working with the Tuskegee Institute, began a study to record the natural history of syphilis in hopes of justifying treatment programs for Black Americans ... The study initially involved 600 black men – 399 with syphilis, 201 who did not have the disease. The study was conducted without the benefit of patients' informed consent. Researchers told the men they were being treated for "bad blood," a local term used to describe several ailments, including syphilis, anemia, and fatigue. In truth, they did not receive the proper treatment needed to cure their illness. In exchange for taking part in the study, the men received free medical

exams, free meals, and burial insurance. Although originally projected to last 6 months, the study actually went on for 40 years. Now that we've established what the article was about and how it is related to the topic of 'symbolic action,' we will return to Solomon's article to show other aspects of symbolic action at work.

The Terministic Screen

The Terministic Screen describes how symbols distort reality or create a partial 'lens' to interpret the world. It is connected to the idea from Burke's "Definition" that symbols create a social reality that may be at odds with the way that other people perceive it. Burke defines the "terministic screen" using the trio of terms "*reflection*," "*selection*," and "*deflection*." In his words,

> [Humans] "seek for vocabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. Any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality."

First, language **reflects** reality or provides a vocabulary that has scope and breadth to account for things that happen in the world. Language then **selects** reality, placing a sliver or snapshot of the real world under a microscope and elevates it to the status of the 'whole thing.' Finally, language **deflects** reality. Humans use language to discard what doesn't fit within the version of reality they have become accustomed to. Burke's examples include a color filter on a camera and the interpretation of the 'same' dream by psychotherapists who come from different traditions of dream interpretation. A color filter deepens the yellows, reds, and blues while also pushing out other wavelengths. A Freudian interpretation of dreams might likely focus on the patient's parents; a Jungian one on their religion and mythical beliefs.

Ultimately, the terministic screen is a way that symbols are used to filter our reality. One example is the "national security state," a framework not just for international relations or the FBI but also for how we think of and organize our homes. The national security state is built on the idea of surveillance, or watching — and that we are somehow safer when there is *more watching*. The national security state is a terministic screen because it has become a part of schools, hospitals, cities, and homes. Even "smart home" technology assumes that intelligence means we can watch everything at once. New parents can take this to new extremes by putting cameras literally *everywhere*. That idea — that when we're watching, helicoptering, surveilling, we are somehow more intelligent, more in control — is a terministic screen. Suddenly the national security state isn't just a way to look at how we pass through airports, but a way to organize our lives.

In "The Rhetoric of Dehumanization?" Solomon connects the terministic screen and "neutral" scientific language. According to Solomon,

> [scientific language] is a "way that symbols are used to filter our reality" that "is constituted by terms through which humans perceive the world," and "that directs attention away from some interpretations and toward others."

Solomon condemns the dehumanizing characteristics of scientific writing, which often removes the author from the essay with the passive voice. (This is also why I don't discourage students from writing using "I," it involves the writer as a participant in the writing process, rather than just as a neutral observer.) Because the Tuskegee reports "avoided emotionally connotative language," researchers emotionally dissociated from patients and deflected attention from human suffering, racism, and the possibility of intervention (pp. 237-238, 244).

The terministic screen of the Tuskeegee report also displays "four features of scientific investigation that "are accepted almost without question." These include

1. The scientific method encourages the perceptions of distinctions and the investigation of their significance.
2. Objectivity and detachment are [wanted or needed] characteristics of the people who administered the Tuskeegee study,
3. Science assumes knowledge as a primary value, rather than the wellbeing of the patient, and finally,
4. The scientific approach is consistent across subject matter areas. These four characteristics were the 'screen' that allowed the Tuskeegee patients to be dehumanized.

Dramatism

Dramatism is a theory that describes instances of communication as if they were staged as a play or a fictional human drama. According to Burke, we read and understand the world rhetorically (i.e., as a narrative or theater performance). We process communicative phenomena through a restricted set of categories that Burke likens to a stage-act, consisting of a *scene*, *actors/agents*, and *agency*. Dramatism tells us that we are not just symbol-using animals but story-telling animals who use dramatistic elements in many different ways.

Dramatism makes two assumptions: First, language is primarily a species of action rather than an instrument of definition. (i.e., its primary function is NOT denotation or to establish the literal meaning of things). Second, that the best way to understand human relations and motives is to analyze symbolic action. There are five elements of dramatism that constitute a "pentad." These include:

1. **The Agent** – the person or kind of person who performed the act;
2. **The Act** – what took place in thought or deed;
3. **The Agency** – how the act was accomplished;
4. **The Scene** – the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred;
5. **The Purpose** – the justification for the act.

Dramatism is like a detective drama, where the rhetorical critic tries to figure out the motives of the people who perpetrated the symbolic act. What is most important about this framework is NOT 'finding' these five

elements but understanding their relationship to one another. This relationship is what Burke called the ratio. In a ratio, one is the 'container,' and the other is the 'thing contained'. The meaning of the second term depends on the meaning of the first.

- The **scene/act** ratio, for instance, requires some explanation of 'where' the act happened to explain 'what' happened. The inventor of anesthesia, for instance, discovered 'oxygen' but called it "dephlogisticated air." Unless we know something about the historical "scene," this "act" of naming would be hard for us to understand.
- The **scene/agent** ratio describes how the "who" is over-determined by the "where." We might be puzzled by the fact that Brittany Spears has withdrawn from public life and developed increasing hostility toward the paparazzi, for instance, until we recognize the larger 'scene' in which such actions have been set: the fact that she has for years been able to go out in public without confronting a sea of microphones, and that she and others have been fighting relentlessly to retain conservatorship of her estate. Without that "where," we lack a clear understanding of the "who."
- The **act/agent** ratio describes how a person's ethos is over-determined by an act attributed to them. In the courtroom, a plaintiff may be symbolized as a 'criminal' by repeatedly drawing attention to the "act." Alternatively, if you send a friend or colleague a basket of baked goods after hearing that they are having a particularly tough day, this act can configure or reconfigure that person's impression of you as a person.

In "The Rhetoric of Dehumanization?**"** Solomon provides several additional examples: the agent/agency and the agent/scene ratio. In the first case, the AGENT (or "who performed the Tuskegee experiments") explains the rationale for the AGENCY, or how "the experiments were done." The agents are 'noble' doctors pursuing knowledge, and the "means to an end" are the patients. Doctors dehumanized the patients because they were only the "agency" for the doctors (the "agents") the means of completing the medical experiment.

In the second case, dehumanization occurs because the disease is the AGENT and the patients' bodies become a SCENE. This choice of language is significant because this ratio erases the fact that the doctors were, in fact, the ones doing harm.

Demagoguery

The last part of this recording is devoted to the topic of **Demagoguery**, which is exactly the kind of symbolic action that Kenneth Burke is concerned about when he talks about the "misuse of symbols." A demagogue is a dangerous speaker who perpetuates conspiracy theories and acts as a political salesperson. They attract an audience by spreading lies that divide a group of people from another group.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-8

Before World War II, Kenneth Burke was concerned with the rhetoric emerging from Nazi Germany and saw a similar pattern of thinking and speaking emerging in the United States. Disturbed by what he saw in Germany, he applied his framework of symbolic action there. He said he identified several key features that were hallmarks of demagogic speech. These features were used to 'constitute' a people using language that is similarly hateful to the speech that was delivered by the staged demagogue in the clip just shown. The demagogue encourages "the division of the attention of a people" by focusing on a convenient but phony scapegoat. He noted specifically the treatment of the Jewish people in Germany. The demagogue also fashioned themselves like a religious pattern, using patterns like rituals, and made themselves into a paternalistic 'father-like figure who would lead the 'feminized' public to salvation. These were above all dangerous characteristics because they are so easily picked up and used elsewhere. When analyzing the dangerous speech itself, Burke also came up with the following characteristic progression of ideas.

- **First, Inborn Dignity.** This stresses the "natural born" dignity of a group elevated above all others while other people are described as innately inferior.
- **Then, the Projection Device.** This gesture associates the target audience's problems with a scapegoat. If one can attribute their problems to a "cause" outside the self, they can battle an external enemy instead of an enemy within.
- **Then, Symbolic Rebirth.** Rebirth involved a symbolic change of lineage by voting oneself and the members of one's group as different and less-than.
- **Finally, Commercial use.** This provides a macroeconomic interpretation of economic problems, such that depression/recession is due to the actions of a particular social group rather than to larger structural forces.

Demagoguery is still prominent in American culture. Watching this final clip, consider the elements of demagoguery and how they are played out in "Dwight's Speech" from the popular television show, *The Office*. In this clip, Dwight is delivering a speech to North Eastern Salesmen after winning an award. He has been given a speech that strongly resembles and was adapted from one by Benito Mussolini.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=76#oembed-9

In the clip, Dwight quickly runs through Burke's criteria: inborn dignity, a projection device, symbolic rebirth, and commercial use. He appeals to inborn dignity when he says that North Eastern salesman stand apart from other people, that they are special and unique because of the difficulty of their work. Next, he appeals to a projection device when referring to "door-to-door charlatans" and those who would be nasty to salespeople in principle. He then tells the audience to "unite" in opposition to these ideas, corresponding with "symbolic rebirth." Finally, he pushes them to the ultimate purpose: more sales, more money, bringing his speech to its commercial use and application.

Additional Resources

- Burke, Kenneth. "Definition of Man." *The Hudson Review*, vol. 16, no. 4, Hudson Review, Inc, 1963, pp. 491–514.
- Fernheimer, Janice W. "Confronting Kenneth Burke's Anti-Semitism." *Journal of Communication & Religion* 39.2 (2016): 36.
- Solomon, Martha. "The rhetoric of dehumanization: An analysis of medical reports of the Tuskegee syphilis project." *Western journal of speech communication* 49.4 (1985): 233-247.

CHAPTER 5: THE SIGN

"This is not a gif" "Smoking pipe 1" by Keith Williamson, CC BY 2.0, added brightness and text

This chapter introduces the concepts of *representation* and *the sign*. These are counterparts to the theory of *the symbol*, and seek to account for the way that language acts both at a given historical moment and across different moments of time. The first part of this chapter adapts premises developed in the textbook *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon.

The first (somewhat longer) section of this chapter addresses representation and the basic components of the sign, as theorized by Ferdinand de Saussure. It then describes the role of *metaphor* and engages the idea that the President (of the United States) functions as a sign for the reading, listening, and viewing public.

The second part of this chapter is a recorded lecture from Dr. Belinda Stillion Southard of the University of Georgia. Dr. Stillion Southard addresses the relationship between *language* and *beliefs* by drawing upon the example of the suffragists and how they can teach us to be attentive to our language choices.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: Signs and Representation (Video, ~40m)
- Part 2: Change the Language, Change the Beliefs (Video also embedded below, ~14m)

Read this Next

- Norton, Anne. "Chapter 3: The President as a Sign." *Republic of signs: Liberal theory and American popular culture.* University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Part 1: Signs and Representations

Here is a simple exercise about representation. Look at any familiar object in the room. You will immediately recognize what it is. But how do you know what the object is? Now try to make yourself conscious of what you are doing – observe what is going on as you do it. You recognize what it is because your thought processes decode your visual perception of the object in terms of a concept of it that you have in your head. This must be so because, if you look away from the object, you can still think about it by conjuring it 'in your mind's eye'.

Now, say what it is. The concept of the object has passed through your *mental representation* of it to me via *the word* for it which you have just used. The word stands for or represents the concept. It can be used to reference or designate either a 'real' object in the world or indeed even some imaginary object, like angels dancing on the head of a pin. This is how you give meaning to things through language. This is how we

make sense of the world of people, objects, and events. It is also how you express complex thoughts about those things to other people in a way they are able to understand. That brings us to our first definition of **representation**.

> **Definition 1:** Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the real world of objects, people or events, or to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, and events.

> **Definition 2:** Representation means using language to say something meaningful about (or to represent) the world meaningfully, to other people. By this understanding, representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture.

How does the concept of representation connect meaning and language to culture? We will look at several theories about how language is used to represent the world.

Approaches to Language and Representation

We will distinguish between three different accounts or theories: (a) the **reflective**, (b) the **intentional,** and (c) the **constructionist** approaches to representation. In other words:

> **Reflective:** Does language simply reflect a meaning which already exists out there in the world of objects, people and events (reflective)?

In the **reflective** approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea, or event in the real world, and language functions as a mirror, to reflect the true meaning as it already exists in the world. As Gertrude Stein once said, "A rose is a rose is a rose." In the fourth century BC, the Greeks used the notion of mimesis to explain how language, even drawing and painting, mirrored or imitated Nature; they thought of Homer's great poem, The Iliad, as 'imitating' a heroic series of events. So the theory which says that language works by simply reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world, is sometimes called 'mimetic'. Language from this point of view is primarily denotative; it indicates the objective status of things.

> **Intentional:** Does language express only what the speaker or writer or painter wants to say, his or her personally intended meaning (intentional)?

The second approach to meaning in representation argues the opposite case. It holds that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends they should mean. This is the **intentional** approach. Again, there is some point to this argument since we all, as individuals, do use language to convey or communicate things that are special or unique to us, to our way of seeing the world. From this perspective, a speaker controls the intended meaning of their language, and correspondingly, steers how an audience might see or perceive them.

However, as a general theory of language, the intentional approach is also flawed. Our words sometimes have

consequences that we do not anticipate. Other times, we can say more than we mean. What, for instance, is the role of intentions when we translate trauma experienced in one domain of our lives into words that we project onto other people? We cannot be the sole or unique source of meanings in language, since that would mean that we could express ourselves in entirely private languages. But the essence of language is communication and that, in turn, depends on shared linguistic conventions and shared codes. Language can never be wholly a private game. Our private intended meanings, however personal to us, have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood. Language is a social system through and through. This means that our private thoughts have to negotiate with all the other meanings for words or images which have been stored in language which our use of the language system will inevitably trigger into action.

> Constructionist: Or is meaning constructed in and through language (constructionist)? What *kind* of constructions are at play?

The third approach recognizes this public, social character of language. It acknowledges that neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix meaning in language. Things don't mean: we construct meaning, using representational systems – concepts and signs. Hence it is called **the constructivist or constructionist** approach to meaning in language. According to this approach, we must not confuse the material world, where things and people exist, and the symbolic practices and processes through which representation, meaning, and language operate. Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world that conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful, and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others.

Additionally, there may be several different kinds of constructions that are at play in a given instance of representation. One kind of representational construction is *semiotic,* which is based on *language* and *shared meaning-making.* Another kind of representational construction is *discursive,* which is a manifestation of *power* being exercised. Consider the clip below. Are the representations conjured by words like "freedom" and "terror" *semiotic, discursive,* or both?

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=88#oembed-1*

George W. Bush's 2001 Declaration of the "War on Terror"

The above clip from 2001 shows George W. Bush declaring "the war on terror" which initiated America's 21st-century interventions in Afghanistan. Bush reuses words like "freedom" and "terror" over and over to create a web of representations and language that support the idea of an emergency or imminent threat. The

argument that words construct our lived realities is brought to life here because Bush's speeches constituted a reality of actual and ongoing warfare, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi people and a failed search for weapons of mass destruction. The representations conjured through this language created an impression of threat, danger, and fear. In turn, these representations produced a social reality that authorized an "endless" war.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Theory of the Sign

Representations create a shared conceptual map for a body of people to use symbols to refer to similar ideas which are held in common. This shared conceptual map must be translated into a common language so that we can correlate our concepts and ideas with certain written words, spoken sounds or visual images. The general term we use for words, sounds or images which carry meaning is **signs**. These signs stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our heads and together they make up the meaning-systems of our culture.

The theory of the sign is most often attributed to the work and influence of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure. who was born in Geneva in 1857, did much of his work in Paris, and died in 1913. For our purposes, he is important for his general view of representation and the way his model of language shaped the semiotic approach to the problem of representation in a wide variety of cultural fields.

> The production of meaning depends on language. As [Saussure] writes, 'Language is a system of signs.' Sounds, images, written words, paintings, photographs, etc. function as signs within language 'only when they serve to express or communicate ideas ... [To] communicate ideas, they must be part of a system of conventions ....'" (Culler 1976, p. 19)

In an important move, Saussure divides the sign into two elements.

First, there is the "concept" or "meaning" of the sign; a shared idea. This is the ***signified.*** Every time your read, hear, or see "poodle," it correlates to the concept of a floofy dog.

The Signifier: An illustration of a delightful poodle

poo·dle

/ˈpo͞odl/

noun

noun: **poodle**; plural noun: **poodles**

1. a dog of a breed (of which there are several varieties) with a curly coat that is often ornamentally clipped. Poodle breeds are classified by size.

2. BRITISH
   a person or organization who is overly willing to obey another.

Origin

LOW GERMAN		GERMAN	
puddeln	⟶	Pudelhund	⟶ poodle
splash in water			early 19th century

early 19th century: from German *Pudel(hund*), from Low German *pud(d)eln* 'splash in water' (the poodle being a water-dog).

Translate poodle to   [Choose language   ▾]

Use over time for: poodle

The referent: the thing-in-the-world, a delightful poodle

Second, there is the **signifier**: the form or sound-image (the actual word, image, photo, etc.) that consists of the different sounds that combine to create a word (P-O-O-D-L-E). can also be an image, such as the one shown below. The **signifier** is the material dimension of the sign. It may consist of the actual sounds we make with our vocal cords, the images made with cameras, the marks we use to write words or paint on canvas, or digital 1s and 0s we transmit electronically.

In his original diagram of the sign, Saussure places the *signified* **over the** *signifier* and separates them with a bar. This bar is meant to illustrate that the signifier (or sound-image) is only associated with the signified (or the implied concept) by convention. There is no necessary relationship between them. The bar is a visual reminder that a signifier (a word or series of sounds) may come to mean something different. Across or at a precise moment in time, a signifier may have different signifieds. Saussure also encloses the sign in an ellipse. This ellipse illustrates how the signifier and signified *appear as if they are fixed.* If I say the word "tree," the meaning (a leafy living organism) seems as though it is permanently attached to this word. However, the sign illustrates that this association is only ever temporary at best.

Saussure's original diagram of the sign. Saussure places the "signified" (or concept) above the "signifier" (or sound image)
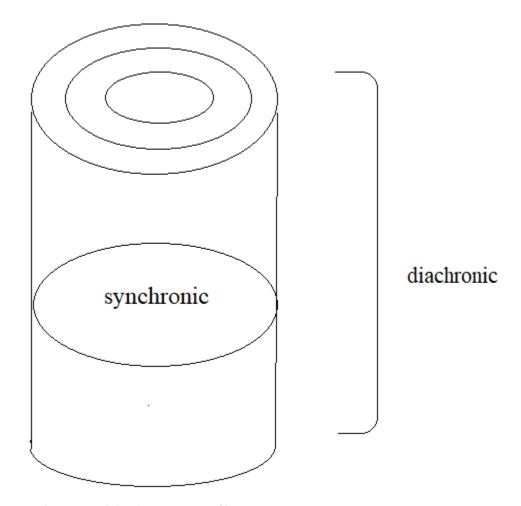
Both the signifier and the signified are required to produce meaning, but it is the relation between them, fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes, that sustains representation. The **sign** is the union of the signifier and the signified. Although we can talk about them as if they were distinct or separate entities, they only exist as components of the sign, which is the central fact of language.

He also introduces a distinction between the "**diachronic**" and "**synchronic**" axes of language.

The **diachronic** refers to the transformation of signs over time. This is represented by the "vertical" (y) axis in the figure below. It is the time during which a language transforms and evolves. The *diachronic* axis draws attention to the sign's meaning for *all time*. It describes the distinct associations of signifiers and signifieds across time and traces a path between them. As a given signifier acquires and sheds distinct signifieds, it may remain in use but with new meanings, uses, and effects across history.

The **synchronic** refers to "horizontal" or immediate time in which the sign exists. It is the "horizontal" (x) axis that refers to the individual *synchronic* snapshots of language's meaning. These are the individual moments in time where the meaning of signs appears stable, natural, and normal. The synchronic dimension of language isolates the meaning of the sign as a relationship to other, related signs in a specific and historically defined instance. The synchronic meaning of the sign is what it means at a particular moment in time, and not what it means for 'all time'.

The synchronic and diachronic axes of language

Consider, for example, how many words there have been since the 1990s to describe the aversive emotional impact of the digital age: people have accused the age of the internet of causing *information overload,* the *too-much-information effect* (now just 'TMI'), *information anxiety,* and (most offensively, but nonetheless a real term that was once used) *infobesity*. Each of these invokes a similar concept, anxiety at the quantity of information that is out there because of the internet. But the sign is arbitrary because in each case it is attached to a different signifier.

> "Each language produce a different set of **signifiers**, articulating and dividing the continuum of sound (or writing or drawing or photography) in a distinctive way ... each language also produces a different set of **signifieds**; it has a distinctive and thus arbitrary way of organizing the world into concepts and categories" (Culler, 1976, p. 23).

The **language system** that is the raw material of signs is used here in a very broad sense. Cultural norms of pronunciation and signification make Spanish, Swedish, Basque, Turkish, and English 'languages'. However, photographs, cinema, and medical imaging (e.g. x-rays), all possess their own unique "languages" as well.

Similarly, we might say that mathematics, computer science, physics, chemistry, and biology share similar "languages." Other, less academic genres share a "language" that is not 'linguistic' in any ordinary sense. For example, the 'language' of facial expressions or of gesture, the 'language' of fashion, of clothes, or of traffic lights. Music is a 'language', with complex relations between different sounds and chords. When this language represents *a meaning* for a subject, it becomes a sign.

Saussure divided language into two parts. He called the underlying rule-governed structure of language, which enables us to produce well-formed sentences, **the langue** (the language system). This consisted of the general rules and codes of the linguistic system, which all its users must share if it is to be of use as a means of communication. The rules are the principles that we learn when we learn a language and they enable us to use language to say whatever we want. For example, in English, the preferred word order is subject-verb-object ('the cat sat on the mat'), whereas, in Latin, the verb usually comes at the end. For Saussure, the underlying structure of rules and codes (langue) was the social part of language, the part which could be studied with the law-like precision of science because of its closed, limited nature. It was his preference for studying language at this level of its 'deep structure' which makes Saussure's model of language *structuralist*.

> 'La **langue** is the system of language, the language as a system of forms' (Culler, 1976, p. 29).

The second part consisted of the particular acts of speaking or writing or drawing, which — using the structure and rules of the langue – are produced by an actual speaker or writer. He called this **parole**. The second part of language, the individual speech-act or utterance (parole), he regarded as the 'surface' of language. There was an infinite number of such possible utterances. Hence, parole inevitably lacked those structural properties — forming a closed and limited set — which would have enabled us to study it 'scientifically'.

> "**Parole** is actual speech [or writing], the speech acts which are made possible by the language" (Culler, 1976, p. 29)

Perhaps the most important aspect of the sign's use in language is that the meaning of the sign is always determined ***differentially.*** That means that The meaning of the sign is fixed based on the relative meanings of the other signifier/signifier combinations that exist relative to it at a given moment in time. For example, the meaning of "panther" is stabilized, for instance, by signs like "cat," "lion," "feline," and "ocelot." But it is also stabilized by its relationship to other signs like "Wakanda," "Fred Hampton," "Kwame Ture," and "COINTELPRO." The meaning of a sign depends on other, related signs. The *difference* between signs ultimately determines many of the concepts we share in common.

Ultimately, language is a social phenomenon. It cannot be an individual matter because we cannot make up the rules of language individually, for ourselves. Their source lies in society, in the culture, in our shared cultural codes, in the language system – not in nature or in the individual subject.

Metaphor Transfers Meaning between Signs

Metaphor describes a relationship between signs. It fits with our discussion because it supports the constructivist view of representation. We experience reality through the language our shared language community uses. Metaphor is part of our basic capacity to construct this reality. It allows us to focus on certain aspects of reality while avoiding others. And different metaphors can depict and transform the *same* reality, so that two people can look at, read, or hear the same thing and come away with a different interpretation of reality.

The word "metaphor" is older than the theory of the sign and is often attributed to Aristotle, who mentions it explicitly in the *Rhetoric*. In Greek, it is the composite of *meta* (over) and *phereas* (to carry). It can be defined as a figure of speech in which two dissimilar things are said to be similar, offering a new perspective on a known issue. Metaphor provides "perspective" by activating a range of cognitive associations. Metaphors are "Non-literal comparisons in which a word or phrase from one domain of experience is applied to another domain." Most importantly, they transfer the characteristics of one object (a vehicle) onto a second object (the tenor).

For example, if I were to say "my roommate is a pig!," *pig* (sign 2) would be the vehicle because I am attempting to transfer characteristics of 'pig-ness' onto them. My roommate is the tenor (sign 1) because they are the literal person, subject, or topic that I am trying to describe.

Sign 1	Sign 2
Signifier	

"RA Roommate" by mattradickal, CC BY-NC 2.0

"pig outside" by wattpublishing, CC BY 2.0

Signified	The concept of a roommate	The concept of a pig

The social construction aspect of metaphors enters the picture when we habitually or even unconsciously begin to use metaphors that texture our reality. We could think, for instance, of how often we describe social or professional situations in terms of implied violence or hostility, thereby setting the expectation and reflecting the reality that our social and work lives are violent. When life is war, we conceive of aspects of our reality in warlike terms. "They *attacked* my argument" or "I *shot down* her point" are ways of imagining oneself as a speech-combatant in which the other person is the enemy. When debates or arguments are battles, then they are framed implicitly as things to be won and lost, rather than spaces for shared understanding. If for instance, we moved to metaphors where arguments were a dance, then this vehicle would allow us to instead imagine

ourselves as partners who are practicing for the purposes of collaboration. This is also the direct tie-in to Part 2 of this recording by Dr. Belinda Stillion Southard. Dr. Stillion Southard argues that it is possible to change beliefs by changing language and that the metaphors we use directly guide the values that we support.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=88#oembed-2

An example of an extended metaphor. TW: Strong language

As a final example of metaphor, the above clip displays John Mulaney's "Horse in the Hospital" sketch. The "horse" is the vehicle for an extended metaphor. Although he doesn't explicitly name his tenor, you will likely be able to deduce it. As John Mulaney notes at the beginning of the clip, the President represents a larger body of people and values. In other words, the President is a **signifier** for a shared set of public meanings. Once you've watched the clip, let's turn to Anne Norton's chapter, "The President as Sign."

The President as Sign

Norton makes the point that Americans are so extensively wedded to the idea of representation that it would be nearly impossible to think of our culture without the many ways that Americans represent themselves *to themselves*:

> Americans represent themselves in public documents and private letters, diplomas and diaries. In education, institutions, and the mundane practices of everyday life, Americans read and write themselves (as they read and write their nation) into being. This self-conscious being in language does not replace being in the flesh. The constraints of the body are partially evaded, but the needs and desires of the body are enhanced and elaborated in writing and in these written selves. (Anne Norton, "The President as Sign" in Republic of Signs, p.3)

All of these are "signs," documents, letters, diplomas, diaries, reading, writing, and bodies are sites of representation, of meaning-making. To that end, the president is a very good example of the theory of the 'sign' in practice. The President represents a lot: "the nation, the government, the executive branch." The President is assumed to represent the nation to itself in many ways.

> "The embodiment of the presidency enables the President to present an image of the people to itself: singular, united, with a common material form and a single will." (p. 121)

On the one hand, as the elected "representative" of the people, the President often seems to stand in for the popular will, even if they do not win the popular vote. The character of the President is understood to reflect the character of the voting public. The policies of the President reflect the values of their electors and the vision

of the future they would like to see. The President also represents the nation when they engage with other leaders abroad, where they strive to erase the idea that there are many 'meanings' competing for attention and publicity in the United States. The fact that the President cannot represent "everything" but must represent "something" is precisely what makes them a sign; their body and individuality act as the material support for a multiplicity of meanings competing for national attention and accountability. That responsibility is, in the words of philosopher Jacques Derrida, both necessary and impossible. It is necessary because governing to benefit the widest population possible. It is impossible because the interests of the population appear to conflict, because the interest of some is to be against governance, or because some interests are refused. That is also why it is so important that the person elected be capable of understanding the obligation of the position to the *public.*

Using Ronald Reagan and Franklin Delano Roosevelt as examples, Norton demonstrates the "variety of representative strategies made available to Presidents through the interplay of signifier and signified in the sign" (93), and revealing the complex history of personality traits and circumstance that help shape presidential history.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=88#oembed-3*

Roosevelt, whose mobility was limited due to polio, took office during the Great Depression. His prominent disability was analogous to the hardship the entire nation faced, and when he spoke of national recovery he could therefore be trusted. When the United States eventually emerged from the Great Depression, Roosevelt garnered comparisons to Lincoln, as the nation's second savior. The President's sick body — and his ability to apparently overcome it — was a sign of the nation's economic sickness, and the chutzpah it would need to overcome it, albeit in a deeply ableist way.

> Roosevelt could be recognized as a representative without recourse to that faith in abstractions that the collapse of central economic significations had undermined. The multiple referents Roosevelt entailed as signifier played a crucial role in determining the meaning of his presidency. The nation was economically paralyzed. Roosevelt was paralyzed. But Roosevelt came from a family of great wealth, power, and prestige. He possessed these himself. This apparent contradiction. in Roosevelt as signifier enabled him to simultaneously represent and subvert the image of the nation as paralyzed and impotent. (p.106)

Reagan's authority and reputation as president in part derived from his career in acting. Though he had not served in actual combat, he had portrayed it on screen, lending credibility to his calls for military action. Reagan's self-aggrandizing bears resemblance to the boasting of Davy Crockett, frontiersman turned congressman. Reagan's own boasting alludes to this history of the mythic Westerner, explaining the personal

exceptionalism that allowed him to transcend from actor to president. As President, Reagan's own "personal exceptionalism" became an "American exceptionalism," an idea that America is beholden to no one and nothing, creating tremendous national debts while rallying his voters in the name of white and evangelical values. Consider the following advertisement, which presents a famous example of "American exceptionalism" as nostalgia for a version of American life which, for many, has never existed:

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=88#oembed-4*

Reagan's 1984 "Morning in America" Campaign Advertisement

As Reagan and Roosevelt illustrate, the office of the presidency holds meaning as a result of those who have previously held office, personality traits, and simultaneous political contexts. This is made possible as a result of the president's visibility to the public, as the president is seen by the public they are able to see themselves reflected in the president "singular, united, with a common material form and a single will" (121). That is why the president is a sign: different versions and visions of a "whole" of the people, the "whole" of the nation.

One of the last points that Norton makes is about Richard Nixon and the way that the Watergate controversy changed the character of the president-as-sign. One of the things that are at least as true today as it was during the Watergate scandal is that the people are subjected to power as a function of *sight*. As Norton writes,

> Those who watched the Watergate hearings saw those who held power brought unwillingly into the public eye. They saw them subjected to the gaze, their actions, their words, their secrets revealed. All who watched participated directly in this exercise of the power of surveillance' a power they held collectively. Those who watched knew that they watched with their compatriots. They knew that their watching was a sign and an exercise of a power held (as it was then exercised) collectively. The President, the President's men' and the congressional committee came under the watching eye of the people.

In the following clip from the film *Frost/Nixon*, which depicts a famous series of post-presidential interviews with Richard Nixon, you can see how Nixon moves from being the "watcher" to being "the watched":

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Part 2: "Change the Language, Change the Beliefs"

A Lecture by Dr. Belinda Stillion-Southard

This lecture continues the discussion of representation by explaining what kind of work language does and how changing our vocabularies can make tangible differences in our world. Dr. Stillion-Southard is a scholar of American feminist rhetoric in the United States and primarily discusses historical instances of speech that sharply contrast with public and political speech today.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=88#oembed-6*

Secondary Readings

- Norton, Anne. "Chapter 3: The President as a Sign." *Republic of signs: Liberal theory and American popular culture.* University of Chicago Press, 1993

Additional Resources

- De Saussure, Ferdinand. *Course in general linguistics.* Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies: Selected and Translated from the French.* Translated by Annette Lavers, Hill and Wang, 1972.
- Culler, Jonathan D. *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction.* Cornell University Press, 2002.

- Silverman, Kaja. "Liberty, maternity, commodification." *New Formations* 5 (1988): 69-89.

CHAPTER 6: RHETORIC AND IDEOLOGY

This chapter is about ideology and myth. It will connect the theory of the sign to the concept of ideology. The first part of the chapter will cover **the materialist theory of ideology**, offering some background on some of its major features, including **value and exploitation**. Then it will discuss the transition from the theory of the "sign" to "**myth**." Finally, it will explain **the ideograph** as an example of how rhetorical scholars have adapted it.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: <u>Ideology and Myth</u> (Video, ~30m)
- Part 2: <u>Agency, Persona, and Speech Act</u> (Video, ~30m)

Read this Next

- Hall, Stuart, "From language to culture: linguistics to semiotics," In *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices.* Vol. 2. Sage, 1997.
- Walter Greene, Ronald. "<u>Rhetorical capital: Communicative labor, money/speech, and neo-liberal governance</u>." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4.3 (2007): 327-331.

Written Assignments

- <u>Assignment Description for Short Paper 2: Annotation Assignment</u>

Part 1: Ideology and Myth

The Materialist Theory of Ideology

Idealism
Ideas, images, concepts

Materialism
the material work, the actual relationships between people and the (economic) hierarchies between them

DETERMINE
the material world, the actual relationships between people and the hierarchies between them.

DETERMINE
Ideas, images, concepts

A formal distinction between (Hegelian) Idealism and (Marxist) Materialism

One common way that Marx's materialist theory of ideology is often summarized is as *"flipping Hegel on his head."* In other words, Marx conceived of his own project as a transformation of the Hegelian "idealist" framework. In Hegel's worldview, the world is composed out of ideas. The "psychic" or "ideational" world of the "soul" takes precedence and shapes the ways in which individuals understand themselves, and determines the physical world which is just an expression of logic and consciousness. In a crossed-out portion of *The German Ideology,* Marx summarizes this position himself:
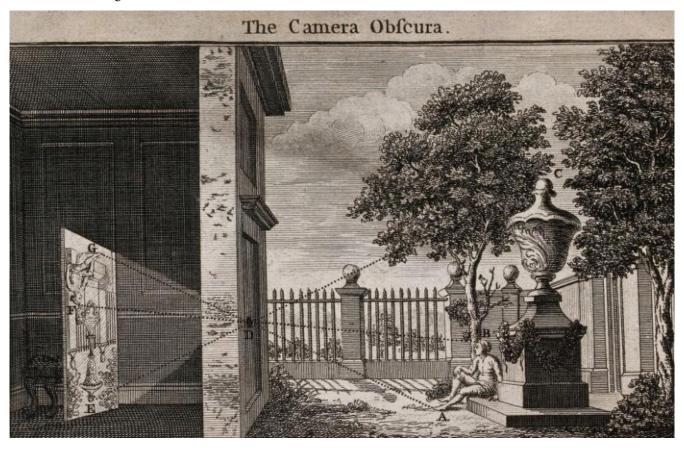
> *Hegel completed positive idealism. He not only turned the whole material world into a world of ideas and the whole of history into a history of ideas. … All the German philosophical critics assert that the real World of men has hitherto been dominated and determined by ideas, images, concepts, and that the real world is a product of the world of ideas. This has been the case up to now, but it ought to be changed. … According to the Hegelian system ideas, thoughts and concepts have produced, determined, dominated the real life of men [sic], their material world, their actual relations.* (crossed-out portion of *The German Ideology*, p. 30)

Marx's view is the opposite of Hegel's. He argues that the world is materialist in the sense that there is an objective reality outside or beyond our ideas about it. The purpose of Marx's project is to demonstrate that our empirical, material reality determines our conceptual, ideational experience of that world. More concisely, how the individual "subsists" or provides for themselves determines culture. Economic structures organize this physical, material life to create our "psychic," (internal, cognitive, or mental) life and correspondingly, the relationships that exist between human beings.

> *If in all ideology men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.* (Marx, *The German Ideology,* p.42.)

The "camera obscura" quotation is especially famous because it also "flips" Hegel's established hierarchy in which "ideas" determine "material" existence. It may look that way, but in fact, the material world generates and constrains our ideational, mental life. The metaphor of the camera is also deeply significant because it

invokes a connection between our consciousness and the technologies available to describe it. For Marx, we are all little cameras: looking at the world as if our ideas created what was in front of us, when in fact, the world creates and limits what we can — and cannot — think and do. If in Hegel ideas are determinative of the real world, in Marx, the real, material world is determinative of our ideas. The camera is therefore more than a metaphor; it is a way of using rhetoric to describe how the invisible part of human vision creates the limit of what can be thought.

The formal relations of materialism as represented through the visual metaphor of the camera obscura.

Ultimately, the "flip" that we will be attentive to is the "flip" from idealism to materialism, paying close attention to the way that actual, real, and lived experience creates social consciousness. This is also how the materialist theory of ideology links to our previous weeks' discussions: the theory of ideology argues that our material conditions determine the signs we use, the symbols we share, and how we imagine and represent ourselves to ourselves, for instance, as free and independent from the systems that we are a part of.

What is Ideology?

In this class, we will define **ideology** as the religious, artistic, moral, and philosophical beliefs contained within and perpetuated by a society or culture, and which are determined by the material circumstances that occasion

them. Ideology may also be explained in terms of an economic structure in which material is hoarded by a ruling 'superstructure' to produce the collective consciousness of the proletarian 'base'. According to Marx, in any society, the ruling ideas are those of the ruling class. According to Ziyad Husami, however, even if this is true, this does not mean that other modes of collective consciousness do not ALSO exist, and that contained within these other ideas are other notions of justice that would render the whole of capitalist ideology unjust or immoral.

Basic premises of "ideology." Marx's theory is often (over-)simplified in the following way: (1) Ruling classes control the material organization of the world (2) Ruling ideas are imposed on lower classes, who internalize it and (3) Each 'class' has its own ideology. For that reason, ideology is often called a theory of *class consciousness*. It describes our consciousness as a function of class hierarchies. Stuart Hall specifically expands upon the idea that ideological consciousness is particular to distinct groups of people, refusing a blanket characterization of the proletariat as a single homogenous group. Different people internalize ideology differently, even if it is the *same* ideology that they have internalized. Let's watch this old-timey cartoon about Marx's theory of class consciousness, and which also helps us to connect the theory of the ideology to some ideas we're already familiar with, namely, the theory of the *sign*.

Labor Value and Labor Exploitation

Marx distinguishes between three kinds of value, "exchange value," "labor value," and "use value" in the following way.

- "Exchange value" is the price of a commodity, and represents the purchaser's ability to *command* labor, to compel its production.
- "Use value" describes the tangible features of a commodity that can satisfy some want or need. Use value serves social needs, but it does not represent the social relations of production.
- "Labor value" or "labor power" is the value of the labor required to produce a commodity. The value of labor covers not just the value of wages but the value of the entire product created by labor.

Capitalism functions by hoarding "exchange value" at the expense of "labor value." Although it's sometimes presumed that the exchange value of an item — the price we pay — is equal to its labor value — or the cost of producing it — wealth depends upon extracting a greater exchange value from a commodity than the labor value used to produce it. Ideology would consist, in this case, in the convictions that arise because of contradictions like this one, and how individuals reconcile the fact that their labor is less valuable than the cost of the goods and services that they produce.

In *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1884, Marx theorizes labor not to be liberating, but as a source of estrangement. The logic of estrangement is rooted in political economy, more specifically a labor theory of value.

Additionally, under capitalism's designations of *private property*, workers add value to raw materials via their labor, creating commodities to be bought and sold. For Marx, labor cannot liberate as it is inherently coercive. Individuals must work to survive, and in doing so generate profit for their employers. Marx argues that labor estranges the individual from their material, physical experience in four ways:

- **(1) It estranges them from the product of their work**; such that the producer of consumer goods doesn't relate to what they make as a "craftsman" but instead as an "interchangeable part" in the production process.
- **(2) estrangement from the activity of production**; such that they do not have control over their labor schedule, the procedure for 'making' goods, the rules of the organizational hierarchy to which they belong, or the parts of the production process that are separate but related to their own.
- **(3) estrangement from species-being**; meaning that they lose touch with other people who may inhabit other jobs or live in different places who have a related existence related to their own work. If we can imagine a worker at a "General Mills" factory who thinks of themselves as opposed to another person in their own position at "Nestle," that gets us close to this kind of estrangement. What these folks can't recognize is the fact that they are in the same or a similar position.
- **(4) estrangement of "man to man."** Beyond identification with other people who occupy similar or related positions, labor estranges us from other people in general, regardless of where they stand or what their social position is relative to ours. We become less available because labor stifles our ability to relate to one another, to empathize, to see others as part of a common community.

Work does not help an individual come to understand the world, and their place in it, but actually obscures it, entrenching them within a partial and illusory version of it. Marx is explicit that liberation requires revolution, or, practical change to things in the physical world. Marx reaches this conclusion in *The German Ideology*, in which he lays out a materialist conception of history.

> "*The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men [sic] — the language of real life*" (42).

From Sign to Myth

As discussed in earlier chapters, the theory of the *sign* is often attributed to [Ferdinand de Saussure](#), whereas the theory of the *symbol* is attributed to the 20th-century rhetorician Kenneth Burke and the 19th-century philosopher [Charles Sanders Peirce](#) (pronounced 'purse'). As we have discussed, Saussure is known for connecting the theory of the sign to general rules of language, whereby the sign gives a form to shared social meaning and its transformation.

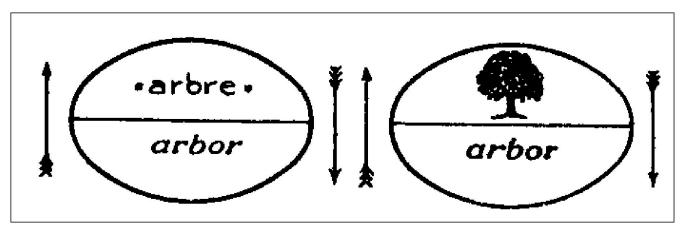| Peirce: What is a Representation/Symbol?	da Saussure: What is a Sign/Language?
Sign-as-**Icon**: likeness/perception	**Langue**: a system with finite, determinate rules. **Parole**: language in situ, or in its practical use.
Sign-as-**Index**: reaction/reference/cause and effect	**Diachronic**: longitudinal characteristics **Synchronic**: momemtary characteristics
Sign-as-**Symbol**: "likeness" has no necessary connection to the object to which it refers, a sign which relies upon the shared understanding of ideas.	The basic unit is the *sign*. The **sign** is the unity of the *signifier* and *signified*. The **signified** is the implied concept. The **signifier** is the sound-image.

Ferdinand de Saussure's schema of the sign, with the signified (concept) over the signifier (sound-image) and arrows to indicate the mutual dependence of the terms upon one another.

The theory of ideology takes the relationship between the "conceptual" or "ideational" meaning (or what the sign represents for us) and the "material" signifier (or the verbal and visual expression used to convey it) and translates it as the distinction between base and superstructure.

The superstructure is the world of ruling ideas or concepts; it is the site where ideology's meanings exist. These meanings depend on a material 'base' — the classes and culture who produce these meanings, which are extracted from them, commodified, and sold back to them. Often "superstructure" is translated as "ruling class" whereas "base" is rendered as the "proletarian" or "laboring" classes.

In the last chapter, we discussed how the sign gains its force and value through its differential relationship to other signs. A sign is a sign by virtue that it is not other signs, that it means something in its difference from other signs that inhabit its (*langue*) sign system, and which evolve through individual speech acts (*parole*). This is, for instance, how Michael McGee and Roland Barthes conceptualize the ideograph, which at a given moment of time draws its meaning from a field of related ideologically charged signs.

Below are two different diagrams for *myth* as a function of the sign. *The sign*, composed of a signifier and a signified (or first-order elements). When they combine to form a sign, it is what Roland Barthes called "second-order signification." *Myth* operates at the level of "third-order signification" and describes is what happens when the sign is elevated above other signs, or when it wields control over a larger sign system. *Myth* also

describes a representation's ideological force. A given sign can acquire an additional meaning or signification, acquiring the weight of "myth" as part of a system of representations that organize popular beliefs. This belief structure can be (for instance) religious, nationalistic, colonialist, or capitalist. When ideology operates through the logic of the sign, it means that the concepts implied by our language contribute signifiers to a larger reservoir of shared meaning-making that defines our relationships to governing (e.g. colonialist, imperialist, or capitalist) structures.

Image from Roland Barthes' Mythologies.

Barthes's demonstration of second-order signification is a magazine cover whose mythic signification is about French colonialism in Algeria occurring at the time of his writing.

Barthes describes the cover in the following way:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of Paris-Match is offered to me. On the cover, a young [child] in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the [French flag]. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this [child] in serving [their] oppressors.

The second-order, or sign value of the image is that the signifier, the saluting boy in a beret, corresponds to the concept of the child-soldier. The third order, or mythic sign value of the image, is what it means "to Barthes": That this "child-soldier" is not coded as just any soldier but as a sign of French national-colonialism in which

the recruit is a ready and willing participant in their own colonization. As third-order signification, the viewer knows that the child salutes the French government and implies that national ideals of extractive, invasive warfare are worthy of being upheld because *this* colonized, militarized child supports it.

> The whole of France is steeped in this anonymous ideology: our press, our cinema, our theatre, our popular literature, our ceremonies, our Justice, our diplomacy, our conversations, our remarks on the weather, the crimes we try, the wedding we are moved by, the cooking we dream of, the clothes we wear, everything, in our everyday life, contributes to the representation that the bourgeoisie makes for itself and for us of the relationships between man and the world.

Disavowal

Let's look at another example of myth, dramatized in the film "They Live," which is explained in this documentary hosted by psychoanalyst Slavoj Zizek. In the film, the main character, "John Nada" awakens to the mythic value of the signs around him. They no longer signify things like "money" or "relaxation," but instead start to signify directly at the level of *myth*, they are written over with the true, exploitative meaning that they would otherwise conceal.

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-1*

As the video shows, the theory of ideology is about more than just the commonly accepted meanings attached to commercial objects. It is about the larger system or structure that creates and determines those meanings, and how attached to those meanings we as individuals become. Ideology also explains the idea that we convince ourselves out of what these third-order signs *actually* or *really* mean. This is called disavowal. When we cultivate beliefs that give us an escape from the reality that we inhabit, we are disavowing reality. Disavowal is like refusing to put on the glasses or to reject reality because we know we can't handle it.

Disavowal is the way that the subject "knows very well" how they act in the service of ideology but "nonetheless" act in ways that work against their own self-interest, in the service of capitalism, or both at once.

> What they do not know is that social reality itself, their activity, is guided by an illusion, by a fetishistic inversion. What they overlook, what they mis-recognize, is not the reality but the illusion structuring their social activity. They know very well how things really are, but they are still doing it as if they did not know (p.32).

Another example of disavowal is purchasing products that claim to be "green" because we are aware that consumerism destroys the environment but need to be reassured that our own personal consumption is not

the problem. Disavowal is a way that ideology produces more symbols, as ways to justify its continued existence and self-perpetuating.

Lastly, the process of "putting on" the glasses, of awakening to the mythic signification of objects, is called "de-mystification." Demystification is the unveiling of myth and the revelation that reality is not what we once perceived it to be. It is what happens at the end of the clip when the actor "wakes up" to the world as it is.

The Ideograph

In "The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Culture," Michael Calvin McGee adapts Barthes' theory of "myth" to rhetoric. McGee explains that the real problem occurs when scholars maintain that "myth" and "ideology" are conflicting ideas. The ideograph is a model that brings together "ideology" and "myth" and that basically repeats the theory of myth we have just discussed. It accepts that individuals have the potential to control power through symbol-use, and acknowledges the strong influence of power over individuals. McGee argues that

> "ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior" (p. 5).

Ideographs, which are used within this language, expose interconnected "'structures'" of public motives" that represent diachronic and synchronic formations of political consciousness.

> [These synchronic/diachronic formations] "control 'power' and influence [...] the shape and texture of each individual's reality" (p. 5).

McGee writes that the only way to diminish power is through prior persuasion, conditioning the meaning of an act before it takes place. Individuals are "conditioned" mainly through certain "concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief" (p. 6). The result is a "rhetoric of control" that suggests persuasion will be effective on an entire community (p. 6). The words that become the vocabulary of this rhetoric (like "liberty," "freedom of speech," and "rule of law") form the basic units of ideology — McGee calls these ideographs. They signal certain accepted propositions to all members of a community. Ideographs are not invented but become part of people's real lives as "agents of political consciousness" (p. 7). Ideographs unite and divide nations because they are a definitive part of the social and material conditions into which various individuals are born, and one community will have accepted a set of ideographs that differs from others. In accordance with McGee's "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," ideographs represent a usage that is social and material, but cannot represent pure thought or truth.

Ideographs are like *signs* because they exist within synchronic and diachronic timeframes. Considered rhetorically, as forces, ideographs are synchronic, meaning that they describe the way that people actually use them 'on the ground' or in practice. At the synchronic level, say, at the start of the 21st century, an ideograph like "equality" might clash with other ideographs like "freedom," "liberty," and "rule of law" and

"confidentiality." Through the emergence of various situations, they may conflict with other ideographs and through this conflict may change its meaning, as can be seen with Nixon attempting to alter the meaning of the ideograph "confidentiality" in relationship to "rule of law."

Synchronic
HORIZONTAL

CONSIDERED RHETORICALLY, AS *FORCES,* IDEOGRAPHS SEEM STRUCTURED **HORIZONTALLY,** FOR WHEN PEOPLE ACTUALLY MAKE USE OF THEM PRESENTLY, SUCH TERMS AS "RULE OF LAW" CLASH WITH OTHER IDEOGRAPHS (SUCH AS "PRINCIPLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY")

EQUALITY   LIBERTY   RULE OF LAW   CONFIDENTIALITY

Diachronic, VERTICAL, Temporal Shifts

ACCORDING TO MCGEE, "THE DYNAMISM OF "EQUALITY" IS PARAMORPHIC, FOR EVEN WHEN THE TERM CHANGES ITS SIGNIFICATION, IT RETAINS FORMAL, CATEGORICAL MEANING, A CONSTANT REFERENCE TO ITS HISTORY AS AN IDEOGRAPH" (RRC 448)

Ideograph image by Emily Winderman. Used with permission.

But diachronically, "equality" shifts depending on when we are describing it. It is, in McGee's words "paramorphic," meaning that even when the term changes its signification, it retains meaning in relation to its historical meanings, its meaning in relation to all of the previous meanings that it might once have had. The diachronic dimension references the usage of an ideograph throughout time. Individuals look through an ideograph's usage historically to locate "touchstones" and "precedents" that help judge what is an acceptable use of that ideograph. As McGee writes, meanings may evolve, but the current meaning of an ideograph is

determined in part by its past context of use. For example, Patrick Henry's explanation, "give me liberty or give me death!" may have been fabricated by the historian William Wirt.

Overall, McGee argues that understanding both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of ideology are necessary — we must see ideology as a "grammar" (diachronically) to know what changes have happened, and also as a "rhetoric" (horizontally) to know how present situations alter the relationships among ideographs.

Part 2: Agency, Persona, and Speech Act

In this chapter, we'll cover the following: *agency, persona,* and *speech act theory*. I'll try to connect *ideology* to each of the terms, and again at the end of the recording. Let's start by defining the three core concepts in this recording, and provide an explanation of how ideology is involved.

How is Ideology related to Agency, Persona, and Speech Act?

- **Agency**, or "the capacity to act": *Ideology limits the capacity to act, or otherwise informs the motives 'behind' why a speaker or an audience acts in the way they do in relation to a claim.*
- **Persona**, or "the implied speaker/audience": *Ideology is the shared substance of identification produced through a speaker's invocation of their own position, the audience's position, as well as excluded, "eavesdropping," and "collusive" parties.*
- **Speech Act**, or "an utterance that performs as an effect of being stated.": *Ideology is the thing that is brought into existence through speech acts as a relationship and hierarchy between different speakers and audiences. Speech acts also have the ability to transform the subjectivity of the speaker or those spoken to/ about.*

Three Kinds of Rhetorical Agency

Agency is often defined as "the capacity to act." When rhetoric enters the picture, it poses the following questions: *who* has the greatest capacity to act: the speaker/rhetor, the listener/audience, or the speech/text?

> Rhetorical Agency "is the capacity to act, that is, to have the competence to speak or write [or engage in any form of symbolic action] in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community." (p. 211)

(1) Rhetor-centered Agency: Speakers have the capacity to create and adapt to audiences.

This is a traditional understanding of rhetorical agency rooted in the "intentional" framework of representation. Because the speaker creates a world of representations and symbols for the listening audience,

they are understood to have the greatest agency. A speaker can create the impression of a threat or danger, they can calm an audience's fears, and they can construct a shared reality that they and their audience may inhabit together. Adapting to an audience is often understood in terms of the speaker's ability to be creative or inventive. If agency lies with the rhetor, then we understand the speaker to be deliberately crafting appeals for the heterogeneous audiences (i.e. of varied composition) that they might encounter. Adapting to an audience can also take the form of double meanings (see also: the fourth persona and the eavesdropping audience) where some members of the audience are more "in" on the message of the speech than others.

(2) Audience-centered Agency. Audiences have the capacity to act because they may accept or refuse the meaning offered by a speaker, and the effectiveness of a speech is ultimately determined by whether an audience acts in accordance with the worldview set out by the speaker.

A great speech is only as great as the effect it has on an audience, and that audience's willingness to pick up the message and run with it. Because an audience may refuse to act (e.g. not going out and voting in the face of a speaker's urging) or act in ways that contradict the speaker's message (e.g. wearing face shields instead of masking) the audience is understood to have the greatest power when it comes to rhetoric because they interpret and act on the rhetoric that is set before them. Additionally, different audiences are differently enabled in the world, depending on whether they possess capital, resources, or ability. Different audiences are marked by race, gender, embodiment, class, and age. For that reason, an audience has agency when it is empowered to be an agent of change, and when there are few constraints (i.e. obstacles or limitations) that would prevent them from acting on (or against) what a rhetor offers in their message.

(3) Text-Centered Agency: A speech, text, or another form of rhetoric has the greatest capacity to act because it will travel in ways that neither a speaker nor an immediate audience can control or comprehend.

Once spoken, written, or otherwise drawn into existence, rhetoric has a life of its own. Consider, for instance, a popular meme template that circulates widely. The original "text" (e.g. the "spider man pointing" meme") may be drawn out in ways that could not have been anticipated by the "rhetor" (e.g. the animators and creators of the meme in 1967) or the "audience" for whom it was created and who interpreted it. Because the message took on a viral life of its own, the message itself has the greatest capacity to act.

By this understanding of agency, meaning is not "eternal," it does not last forever and it changes over time. Likewise, humans are not isolated from one another or from history because the sum total of interactions is what lends a given instance of rhetoric form and meaning. Rhetorical agency in this sense is perhaps better understood as existing within a larger system of interactions.

This form of agency is also embraced by the posthumanist tradition, which rejects the human agent as the primary source of change. Instead, that agent is a participant in the larger network of which they form a part. Agency occurs not solely within the realm of human intention or the direct result of human action but somewhat outside of human control.

Let's consider an example, George W. Bush's "Bullhorn Speech" in the wake of September 11, 2001, and think about how the different kinds of agency describe what is happening in the video.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-2

- **Rhetor-centered agency** in this video might describe the intentions of the speaker, their willful crafting of a speech. In this case, we are talking about George W. Bush, who presumably came with a speech and with an intended message for the audience: we care about first responders. However, the fact that he loses control over the message also suggests that rhetor-centered agency might not be the best way to account for the communication that is happening.
- **Audience-centered agency** in this video describes how the audience changes, adjusts, and re-assembles what "George" is saying to them. It is less what the speaker intended and more what the audience hears and how they respond. This is a better way to think about this speech, perhaps, because there is a clear moment when the speaker loses control of the message. Instead, the audience reacts based on what they *think* they heard, and not George's intended message.
- **Text-centered agency** is perhaps the best way to explain this clip, and consists in the idea that it is neither the speaker nor the audience that is 'in control' or has the ability to act, but rather the signs and symbols that are being cited. The phrase "I can hear you" is what has agency here. It can be addressed to a person or to a group. It can have multiple meanings, literally, your words register on my eardrums, or figuratively, your desires and wishes are known to me. The message controls the possible reactions to the situation.

Agency and Ideology

Given that agency describes "the capacity to act," ideology limits the capacity to act, or otherwise informs the motives 'behind' why a speaker or an audience acts in the way they do in relation to a claim. Ideology seems to limit our agency. The beliefs we adhere to create a window upon the world that reminds us of what is and is not possible, what we can and cannot do, what is and is not acceptable. If we adhere to the idea that upward mobility is the only way to "make it" in the world, then this belief may limit the jobs we take, the opportunities we seek out, or even our willingness to step away from the positions we have. The belief guides us to act in certain ways while restricting us from behaving in others. When, for instance, we *disavow* the world around us, or subscribe to beliefs that exist to justify the ideological system we inhabit, ideology limits our ability to think and act in the world because those actions work in service of this ideology. However, de-mystification creates the perception that we have agency because we gain the ability to read signs and symbols in a way that we previously did not. With demystification, we gain a capacity to read, see, and understand, and therefore, to also act differently with respect to the reality that we perceive.

Persona

In Rhetorical Studies, the word "persona" is a way to describe the characters conjured by a speech or speaker. Only in the case of the "first persona" does it refer to the "character" of the speaker themselves, or the kind of individual that the speaker makes themselves out to be. In all other cases ("second," "third," "fourth," and "eavesdropping") the word persona refers to the audience that the speaker creates. It describes, for instance, how the speech creates a vision of who the audience is for the listening audience, generating an identity with which to identify (second persona). It also describes those audiences who are excluded, omitted, or hidden by the speech (third, fourth, and eavesdropping persona) but which are nonetheless hailed by the speech.

1. The *First Persona* "is the author implied by the discourse." (p. 213) There is no one author to attribute the concept of the first persona because it was for a long time assumed that the intentions of the speaker generated the audience's imagination of itself as well as the speaker's own authoritative speaking position.

2. The *Second Persona* is "the implied audience for whom a rhetor constructs symbolic actions." (p. 213) The second persona is, in a way, an 'original' form of ideology criticism because it was developed by Edwin Black as criticism of the anti-Communist John Birch Society, which metaphorically linked communism to cancer to constitute an audience of like-minded individuals who would take up the society's conservative stance and aggressively paranoid mindset.

3. The *Third Persona* refers to the "audiences not present, audience rejected or negated through the speech and/or speaking situation." (p. 214) These are the audiences excluded, but who are necessary for the speech to exist at all. A commemoration speech about the building of the White House that does not acknowledge the history of enslaved persons who labored to build it is an example of this kind of speaking — the audience may or may not be present as hearers, but they are both crucial, necessary for the speaker to make their address and at the same time, deliberately omitted as a means of dehumanizing this audience or pitting them against those people who are being addressed.

4. The *Fourth Persona* "is an audience who recognizes that the rhetor's first persona may not reveal all that is relevant about the speaker's identity, but maintains silence in order to enable the rhetor to perform that persona." (p. 217) The scholar who develops this theory, Charles Morris, uses the example of mid-twentieth century FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who publicly conveyed messages about a "sex crime panic" while subtly dropping cues in his speeches that only a 'knowing' audience would be able to decipher or know. These messages conveyed messages about Hoover's own gender, which gay listeners would be 'in' on but would be unable to vocalize or address. The fourth persona is this "collusive audience," who is 'in' on the speaker's message but who act as a silent party for their dog whistles or doublespeak.

5. The *eavesdropping audience* "is an audience whom the rhetor desires to hear the message despite explicitly targeting the message at a different audience." (p. 217) This can be for two reasons: (a) To

limit room for response by, or the agency of, the eavesdropping audience or (b) To allow the eavesdropping audience to feel empowered because they are not being criticized even as they hear criticisms made against others.

The eavesdropping audience is most often credited to Gloria Anzaldua, who "addresses a specific group of women, 'third world women,' not all women (and not to any men). She linguistically and symbolically reinforces this address in the first and last sections by opening with "Mujeres de color," thus placing first-world women (and men) in the position of reading mail unintended for them. They become the eavesdroppers. The letter moves first-world women (and all men) to a borderland when it does not address the letter to them, while it empowers "Mujeres de color" by literally addressing them as the primary subjects. First-world women are written about. Men are just absent; they are not written to, nor do they write. Men and first-world women are uninvited eavesdroppers and, hence, suspended from a critical position. They are reminded of their difference. They are reminded that they constantly tokenize third-world women and deny differences among women. The letter reverses power relationships so that first-world women are allowed access without input, a condition "Mujeres de color" often experience. (p.218)

As a final note about these different kinds of persona, there are circumstances when there are multiple personas at work in a single speech or written work. For example, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is addressed to multiple audiences: It is explicitly addressed to "My Dear Fellow Clergymen" — meaning white moderates, who comprise a direct second persona, the implied listeners or readers of this document. It also indirectly speaks to all Black people in the United States as King attempts to persuade them to risk their bodies in nonviolent civil disobedience in civil rights protests. This is the audience who is invited to "eavesdrop" on the conversation. White moderates appear unwilling to act, so it is other African Americans who must be persuaded to push for social change. (p. 219)

> "Like King, [black readers] can view themselves as agents who need not and will not suffer the indifference of white moderates, who can break free of external restraints without losing self-restraint, and who can work from within American society to make fundamental changes in the way they conceive themselves and are conceived by others." (Leff and Utley)

Let's consider another example: an anti-child abuse advertisement that is designed for reception by multiple audiences. In this case, the advertisement is the "speech" or "rhetoric" that constitutes a variety of different characters.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-3

The first persona is the persona of the speaker or crater of the advertisement. It consists in their intended meaning as well as the position of the "socially responsible company," who is authorized to act on behalf of suffering children.

The second persona is the implied audience of the message, the person or people to whom the advertisement is addressed. The implied audience is the adult who is reading the ad, and who sees themselves in the way that the company would like. This reader might, for example, recognize that harm done to children is invisible, and supports the idea of a socially conscious company doing something about it.

The third persona is the excluded audience of the message who is nonetheless necessary for its existence. It is the fact of the person who abuses or harms children, the person who cannot or is not "persuaded" to stop this abuse, but who must exist for the advertisement to also have meaning.

The fourth persona is, finally, the audience who "colludes" with the speaker, who is 'in' on the message even if no one else knows it. It is a message within the message for the hearer, for whom it was designed. This is the child, who alone is able to see, hear, or read the message for its subversive meaning. In this case, the child may also be the *eavesdropping audience*, whose relative inconspicuousness allows them to be empowered because they are not being criticized even as they hear criticisms made against others.

Persona and Ideology

Persona, or "the implied speaker/audience" is implicated in ideology because creating a persona requires that we identify with an ideology. This means that a shared system of belief is necessary to create a shared impression of the speaker, audience, as well as "eavesdropping," and "collusive" parties. In that sense, persona describes the ideological disposition the speaker would like the audience to have, as well as the ideological disposition shared by the audience and speaker. It is a way of talking about the common ground established between these characters, and how that "ground" creates the conditions of exclusion or nonparticipation. One may be part of the same ideological belief system or be a part of it by virtue of being excluded from it. Ultimately, persona allows us to think about the expression of ideology as the relative position of the audience to a message that influences their system of belief and representation.

Speech Acts

The theory of speech acts is typically attributed to [J.L. Austin](), a British ordinary language philosopher. His schema of the *locution* (shown below) offered important and widely cited distinctions between the constative and performatives, and within the category of performatives, illocutionary force, and perlocutionary effects.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │  Locutionary │
                    └──────────────┘
             ┌─────────────┴─────────────┐
      ┌──────────────┐           ┌──────────────┐
      │  Constative  │           │ Performative │
      └──────────────┘           └──────────────┘
                          ┌─────────────┴─────────────┐
                   ┌──────────────┐           ┌──────────────┐
                   │ Illocutionary│           │ Perlocutionary│
                   └──────────────┘           └──────────────┘
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J.L. Austin's Schema of Locutionary Utterances.

The *locution* is the most general category of an utterance. It is, for our purposes "any" utterance or instance of speech. A location may be *constative* or *performative.*

A *constative* utterance is what we most often understand as "denotation," "reference" or *literal* meaning. To call an utterance "constative" makes the assumption that the thing said corresponds with a real thing in the world. There is no room for subjective interpretation with the constative utterance; things mean what they mean regardless of the context they occupy. In the example suggested below, "that's an *interesting* hot dish," the word *interesting* literally means "provoking curiosity or interest." Free from context, "that's an interesting hot dish" is a way of describing your contribution to the potluck as novel,

A *performative* utterance is one that depends upon context for its meaning. Traditionally, it corresponds with the "connotative" or "subjective" meaning of an utterance. But it is also much more than that: when we talk about the performative, the words have an interpersonal force for the people it is addressed to. If we said a performative utterance in one context, it would not necessarily land the same in another. It also lands differently, depending upon the person to whom it is addressed. If I said "that's an interesting hot dish" to someone from Georgia, where I went to school, it likely wouldn't bother anyone. But if I were to say the same phrase to a guest in Minnesota, it would land with the force of an insult.

To explain the unique consequences of the performative, Austin divides the performative into two kinds: *illocutionary force* and *perlocutionary effect.*

The performative's *illocutionary force* refers to statements that have an effect 'as stated', or the doing of something as one states it. "I pronounce you both married" is an example because there is something done

in the saying of this phrase: it transforms two people from being "engaged" into a family unit with a special personal, religious, and legal significance. One way to think of *illocutionary force* is as the *immediate* consequences of the speech act. In the case of "that's an interesting hot dish," it transforms the relationship between the cook and the recipient by serving up an insult *at the moment*.

The performative's *perlocutionary effect* refers to consequences not immediately experienced when the speech act is spoken. It may be thought of as a distant or long-term effect of the speech act. Marriage confers a number of long-term consequences that are not immediately felt: a shared bank account, expectations with respect to in-laws, new habits of communication. In the case of the "hot dish," the statement might strain the relationship between the people involved, or it might provoke the hot-dish maker to seek revenge.

Example: "That's" an interesting casserole/hot dish"

Utterances	Definition	Examples
Constative	Denotation, meaning free from context	"Interesting" as a denotation.
Performative	Subjective meaning or connotation, meaning dependent upon context.	"Interesting" as connotation.
Illocutionary (force)	Responds to the speech act as stated. The performance of an act 'in' saying something.	"I now pronounce you married" or "The jury finds the defendant not-guilty," both of which transform the subjectivities of persons. The performative force is "Insult"
Perlocutionary (effect)	The consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of the other	Changes to tax filings of the expunging of criminal records. The performative effect is "Revenge"

Up to this point, we've been considering performatives that "work," or that have the intended consequence. When I say, "that's an interesting hot dish," and you hear sarcasm, that's a felicitous performative or one that hits its mark. But speech acts don't always work the way we intend. When a speech act does *not* have the performative effect its speaker anticipates, it is called an *infelicitous performative.* Let's watch this example:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-4*

What does Michael misunderstand about speech acts? He doesn't understand that "declaration" is a legal and bureaucratic act, not just one you can speak into existence. It's a speech act that doesn't hit the mark because it

can't be addressed the way he does. As illocution, it cannot make him into a bankrupted subject (he did that to himself) and as perlocution, it cannot entitle him to the benefits he seeks by claiming this legal status.

Speech Acts and Ideology

Speech acts, or "utterances that perform as an effect of being stated" are related to ideology because ideology creates many kinds of effects through speech. In fact, ideology reproduces itself through speech acts. Speech acts also have the ability to create and misidentify the subjectivity of the speaker or those spoken to/about, thereby subjecting them to repressive or hegemonic ideologies.

A famous example of the speech act is the hail of the police. As you are walking down the street, the police call out "hey you," and your back is turned to them. The phrase "hey you" is the speech act. The consequences are significant because the recognition — even the incorrect recognition — that you are the person being called out, or that you are the "subject of the hail" is the consequence of ideology. That is the system or structure that has to exist even before those words were said. Ideology calls you into being as a subject, as someone who exists in the same system of power and hierarchy. The illocutionary effect is to turn around in the moment, but the perlocutionary effect is to recognize yourself as subject to the law. This is called *interpellation.*

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* [*https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-5*](https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=152#oembed-5)

Interpellation has many different kinds of effects. Rhetorical scholar Maurice Charland explains that "a people" come together when people write up founding documents. These documents are performative speech acts; they include the American Declaration of Independence or the Canadian Constitution of the Peuple Quebecois. Each of these is performative because they had short and long-term effects for not just one person, but a specific group of people: they named themselves as independent or separate from an existing governing entity. Judith Butler, author of *Gender Trouble* and *Excitable Speech*, returns us to the police, saying that these kinds of speech acts often aren't as explicit as a "hey you." Instead, they may take the form of legal arguments or personal injuries that can deny the person named of their gender identity. Butler calls this kind of speech act a *"violating interpellation,"* in which a person is made less-than through ideologically-driven institutions and actors.

Secondary Readings

- Hall, Stuart, "From language to culture: linguistics to semiotics," In *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices.* Vol. 2. Sage, 1997.
- Walter Greene, Ronald. "Rhetorical capital: Communicative labor, money/speech, and neo-liberal governance." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4.3 (2007): 327-331

Additional Resources

Materialist Rhetorics

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CHAPTER 7: RHETORIC AND ARGUMENTATION

"General Assembly" by hmerinomx, CC BY-SA 2.0

This chapter is about rhetoric and **argumentation** and is divided into three sections. The first introduces key terminology related to "argumentation" including **syllogism** and **enthymeme**, **Monroe's Motivated Sequence**, **presumption** and **burden of proof**, and **audiences of argument.** The second section introduces **the Toulmin Model**. Whereas the Toulmin Model focuses on the structure of individual claims, the third section of the chapter introduces the **Logical Dependency** model, which may be used to scaffold an entire speech or essay. This section also discusses **fallacies** or the characteristic errors of argumentative reasoning.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: <u>Key Terms and Definitions</u> (Video, ~15m)
- Part 2: <u>The Toulmin Model</u> (Video, ~20m)
- Part 3: <u>Dependency and Fallacies</u>(Video, ~20m)

Read this Next

- Palczewski, Catherine Helen, et al. "Chapter 4 Argument." *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, Strata Pub., State College, PA, 2012, pp. 99–127.

Part 1: Key Terms and Definitions

This first section is about *key terms* for argument. This will include two definitions of argument and how they relate to the terms **fact**, **value**, and **policy**. It means we're gonna be talking about structures of argument including the **syllogism** and the **enthymeme** as well as **Alan Monroe's motivated sequence**. We're gonna be talking also about **presumption, the burden of proof**, **kinds of argument-audience**, and **spaces of argument**. These describe the audiences for whom arguments circulate and the places or the locations where arguments may be found.

Defining Argument

> One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: *https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=178#oembed-1*

In the above clip, Kelly Kapoor (played by Mindy Kaling) invents a distinction between two different kinds of argument: trash talk and smack talk. Trash talk is hypothetical and doesn't describe a real-world situation. Smack talk is happening right now because the evidence is in front of us. The example resembles argumentation because a major way that arguments are built is by drawing divisions or distinctions. Generally, we should also think of argumentation as a practice of reason-giving in which a speaker provides reasons to support a given claim. We can also think of arguments in two additional ways: as *things* and as *relationships*.

Arguments as Things

When we talk about arguments as things, we're talking about speech that we exchange between different participants in an argument. And one person presents a claim and then supports it with evidence to gain assent to the claim or to get other people to believe that the claim is true. We've already thought about arguments as things all the way back in Chapter 1. There, we drew upon Aristotle's three rhetorical genres: forensic, epideictic, and deliberative.

- **Fact**-based claims are forensic because they are concerned with what is and isn't the case, and prove the truth or falsehood of a claim. These are also known as arguments that fall within the **forensic** genre of rhetoric.
- **Value**-based claims are epideictic because they either *praise* or *blame*. These are also known as arguments that fall within the **epideictic** genre of rhetoric.
- **Policy** claims are deliberative because they are concerned with what we should or shouldn't do as a course of future action. These are also known as arguments that fall within the **deliberative** genre of rhetoric.

When we talk about arguments as things, we're talking about speech that we exchange with one another as well as discrete claims that we make about the true and the false (*forensic*), praise and blame (*epideictic*), and what we either should or should not pursue as a course of action (*deliberative*).

Arguments as Relationships

When we think about arguments as forms of interaction, we're thinking about how people interact. Argument-based relationships are modulated by three factors: culture, ritual, and learning.

- A **cultural context** exercises a strong influence over the kinds of relationships created by argument. In some contexts, arguments are thought of as "heated disputes," which leads people to avoid arguing at all costs. In others, arguments are a routine part of group interactions and are part of normal social behavior. Different cultural contexts for argument define different rules for when and how arguments can be made. Often, departing from one's family or familiar home environment challenges these rules. A person who goes to a department store and attempts to negotiate the price of the items there may be more familiar with a cultural context in which arguments are part of buying and selling rituals.
- **Rituals** of argument may also define distinct kinds of relationships. Families, courts of law, and graduate school each create unique rituals around argument: whether or not to allow them, when to accept them, and how they should be made. Often, arguments are ritualistically made in self-defense or in support of candidates for jobs. The defining feature for such rituals is that arguments are made in a consistent way and that participating in them is part of defining oneself as a member of a larger group.
- **Learning** is a final way that relationships develop around arguments. One circumstance in which arguments are leveraged is an educational setting, in which people have the opportunity to test claims and arrive at well-thought-out conclusions. Whether through the classroom or the process of peer review, different arguers engage with one another in order to facilitate a greater common interest. When experts or authorities make arguments, we also learn how to make claims. When we see someone on television using an argument that connects rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to global warming, we may learn how to make similar claims. Using arguments and warrants makes them more available to others.

Syllogisms and Enthymeme

When we think about arguments as things, most often we are thinking of them as structures or organizations of information that allow us to convey an argument to someone else. The earliest forms or structures of argument that allow us to think of an argument as things are the syllogism and the enthymeme.

The syllogism is long-form logical reasoning. A way of reasoning that first developed in philosophy in which a statement is offered, a second statement is offered, and a conclusion is provided that is a permutation of these two statements. Syllogisms are statements in which a conclusion is inferred from the truth of two premises.

- Major premise: all pandas are mortal
- Minor premise: John is a Panda

- Conclusion: John is mortal.

Characteristically, with syllogisms all work is shown, you can see all of the steps taken. The enthymeme is a similar form of reason, but unlike the syllogism, some element is left out for the audience to fill-in. By leaving some part of the argument out, what this allows is rhetorical persuasion or the feeling that the audience is "in" in the act of logical reasoning. Instead, the audience's inference supplies a missing premise, allowing persuasion to occur in the mind of the audience.

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The 1990s ad Be Like Mike featured Michael Jordan for instance drinking copious amounts of Gatorade, followed by the sign "Be Like Mike" that aired at the very end. What the audience would fill in is the idea that drinking Gatorade would allow them to "be like Mike."

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For many watchers/listeners, the tri-tone jingle of this advertisement is instantly recognizable. The number they provide (like 867-5309) is embedded in the memory of MILLIONS and the company name functions like a punchline to the tune. This resembles the enthymeme because the audience is part of the persuasion. They participate in the message because they are "in" on the reasoning of the advertisement.

Alan Monroe's Motivated Sequence

A related way of structuring arguments comes to us from Alan Monroe who in the 1950s developed a sequence of arguments that allowed salespeople to put their products on display in an easy and accessible manner. Monroe's motivated sequence lives on today because we can see it in patterns of speech that appear on television advertisements. It has the following steps:

- **Attention:** A flashy opening, something that takes the audience by surprise or gets them to tune in.

- **Need:** Establish that the audience needs something or that something is lacking from their lives.
- **Satisfaction:** Satisfy the need with a product. Presumably, this consists in an explanation of how the product fills the need.
- **Visualization:** Allow the audience to see how their lives would be changed or different by acquiring the product.
- **Call to action:** Specific steps or instructions to take to acquire this new magical thing that was going to transform everything.

Here are two classic examples:

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In the second ad, the late Billy Mays first gets our **attention** with his signature self-introduction. He then establishes a **need**: tough-to-clean stains. The solution that **satisfies** this need? Oxi-Clean, which cleans, brightens, and eliminates odors all at once. Mays then provides a range of **visualizations** to allow the viewer to envision how they would use this product. In conclusion, Mays provides the call to action: to purchase Oxi-Clean, presumably at an all-time low price. This sequence, the syllogism, and the enthymeme are arguments as things. They are discernable structures people have used to leverage claims, exchange capital, and gain others' attention.

Presumption and the Burden of Proof

Presumption and the burden of proof describe distinct obligations or the responsibilities given to arguers who engage in a *debate*. In debates, arguers typically take on one of two roles: the affirmative (who proposes a policy) and a negative (who defends the *status quo*). Alternatively, in a forensic, courtroom setting, these arguers either take the role of the plaintiff (the accuser who brings forth a case) or the defendant (the accused who defends against this case). They are usually oppositional in nature and so they have different roles or different tasks that they have to fulfill.

The affirmative and the defendant share the characteristic of *presumption*. Presumption means that we should believe that a given set of facts or information is true unless proven otherwise. A defendant in a courtroom should have the presumption of innocence, which means that we would presume that what they say is true unless contravening evidence arises. Likewise, for the affirmative in a debate, there is often a *presumption* that their plan will work unless the negative proves otherwise.

The companion to presumption is *the burden of proof*, which traditionally belongs to the person in a debate who brings forth the charges: the plaintiff and the negative. The role of a negative in a policy case is to generate uncertainty about the affirmative, to prove that their case will not work as planned, or that their evidence rests on shaky ground. As the plaintiff in a court case, you would have the responsibility to offer reasons that would overcome the defendant's presumption, thereby casting significant doubt upon it. However, not all burdens of proof are the same, as illustrated by this video on the distinction between criminal and civil courtroom trials:

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=178#oembed-6*

Presumption and the burden of proof, therefore, describe two different roles and responsibilities given to the participants in the debate: one of them is the affirmative/defendant who is given presumption, and the other is the negative/plaintiff, who receives the burden of proof.

The Audiences of Argument

The audiences of an argument can be divided into two categories: the universal and the particular audience. These concepts answer the question: "to whom is an argument addressed"?

The **universal audience** is the audience of all reasoning, beings, and humanity. If everyone were presumed to be rational, capable of reasoning, then the universal audience would be the audience to whom this message was addressed. In other words, if we needed to get emergency information to COVID-19 out to the public, it would be addressed to a presumed universal audience: all people who are capable of reasoning or all people who are capable of taking in a message. Likewise, when we dispose of nuclear waste, it has become a problem for scientists to develop messaging that wouldn't just last for ten years or twenty years, but hundreds or thousands of years into the future. Making them imagine a universal audience for whom a single message would still be intelligible. The question is, what would it take to communicate with all of humanity? How would it be possible to create a message that would be available to literally everyone?

The **particular audience** is the actual audience we engage in the real world. Particular audiences are varied and have their own dispositions, judgments, values, attitudes, opinions, rituals, and traditions. Particular

audiences remind us that it is not possible to just send one message to all people and expect the same response or reasoning. Particular audiences require arguers to tailor their messages. Just as you would not send one letter to every potential future employer, a particular audience is a "someone" rather than an "everyone," they must be addressed with a message specifically *for them,* rather than with one message that you're sending out to the public.

Spheres of Argument

The spheres of argument describe the places where it is that arguments can be found. From smallest to largest, the personal, the technical, and then the public are the places where these arguments circulate.

A 'sphere' "denotes branches of activity – the grounds upon which arguments are built and the authorities to which arguers appeal."

Public

If a public forum is appropriately designed as a sphere of argument to handle disagreements transcending personal and technical disputes, proof and reasoning will not be as informal as in the personal and more common than in the technical.

"public science," blogs, IPCC reports

Social media, news blogs, opinion/ editorials

Public forums/ hearings

"A conversation with a community of scholars," narrowed subject matter only relevant to the interests of a community. Uses formal expectations of a scholarly argument, judged by referees as worthy of preservation.

WebMD, professional consultations

strangers arguing in an airport," subject matter and range of claims decided by disputants; evidence is discovered within memory, rules emerge from general experience, fair judgment, strategic guile.

Technical

Personal

G. Thomas Goodnight, "The Personal, Technical and Public Spheres of Argument: A Speculative Inquiry into the Art of Public Deliberation," Journal of the American Forensic Association 18 (1982): 106-119. 1. "Argumentative endeavors involve the creative resolution and the resolute creation of uncertainty." 2. "Particular arguments emerge in concert with or opposition to ongoing activity in the [three] spheres." 3. "Argument practices arising from the personal and technical spheres substitute the semblance of deliberative discourse for actual deliberation, thereby diminishing public life."

- The **personal sphere** is the place of limited circulation and informal reasoning. Meaning people aren't using syllogisms, they are using enthymemes more often than not, and the arguments that are made are intuitive to the people that belong to that personal sphere. The participants are ley participants, are non-experts, and so the concerns of this community largely regard the members of that community. It is the place where the most informal arguments occur among a small number of people, involving limited

demands of proof, and are often about private topics.

- The **technical sphere**, by contrast, has expert participants who use formal reasoning and the participants in this sphere can vet each other's arguments because they all belong to the same shared community. However, like the personal sphere, the arguments that circulate in this sphere have limited circulation. It is an argument sphere that has explicit rules for argument and is judged by those with specific expertise in the subject.

- Finally, the **public sphere** is the largest or widest sphere of argument circulation. In terms of the other terms we've just discussed, it is most like the universal audience. It is the argument sphere that exists to handle disagreements transcending personal and technical disputes. When arguments escape the personal sphere or escape the technical sphere, they go into the public sphere where they can be interpreted, misinterpreted, and negotiated. Twitter is a good (albeit small) example of a public sphere because of the way that personal disputes or technical information can escape and then become part of a larger discussion (although, of course, that doesn't always happen and sometimes arguments also stay in their respective spheres).
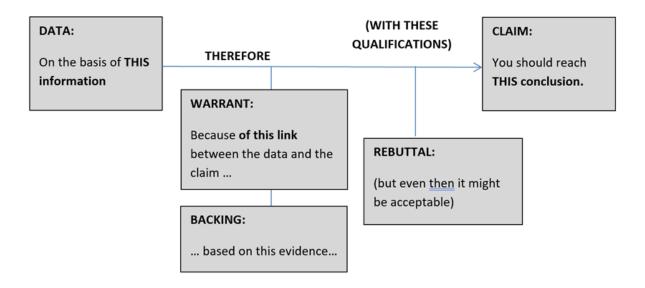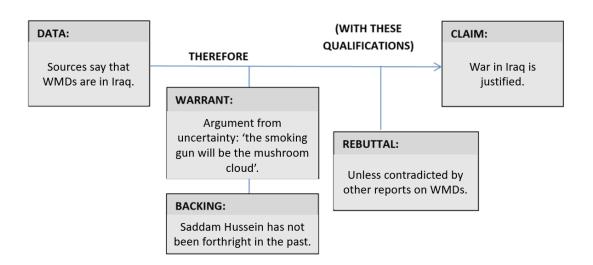
Part 2: The Toulmin Model
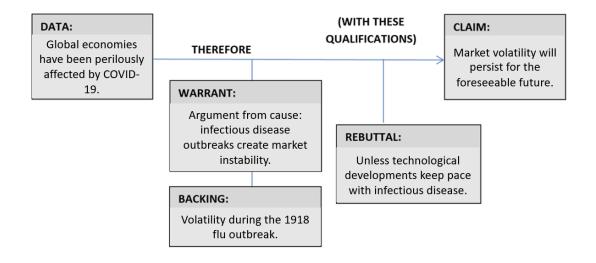
The Toulmin Model has several specific features:

- First, it imagines arguments as objects of verbal exchange. This places it into the category of arguments as things, discussed in the previous lecture—or as objects that are transacted between arguers.

- Second, the Toulmin Model is useful for individual claims that you would set out to prove in a paragraph or less. When thinking about how to apply the Toulmin Model to your own writing, this would be a way of organizing individual paragraphs or sentences, rather than a way of thinking about how to build out the structure of an essay as a whole. (We'll talk more about how essay argument scaffolding is better understood in terms of the logical dependency model in the next major section).

- Finally, the Toulmin Model is a way to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of individual arguments. For example, if the evidence is not sufficient in a given argument or if the reasoning is not strong, the Toulmin Model points to these elements as specific ways to address the weakness of arguments.

The Toulmin Model has six components. The primary elements are the *claim*, the *data* (or *evidence*) and the *warrant* (or *reasoning*). A *claim* is a contestable statement based on the *data/evidence*. The *warrant* is the logical connection between the *data* and the *claim*. The secondary elements are the *qualifier*, the *rebuttal*, and the *backing*. The *qualifier* softens the claim by making it conditional. The *rebuttal* offers likely counterarguments to the major claim. And the *backing* is evidence that the *warrant* is itself sound. The images

below shows the full Toulmin Model, including all six of its separate elements, as well as an example drawn from Colin Powell's 2003 speech to the United Nations.

DATA:

Rats exposed to chemical agent 274 perished.

THEREFORE

(WITH THESE QUALIFICATIONS)

CLAIM:

Humans will be harmed if exposed to chemical agent 274.

WARRANT:

Argument from analogy: if two things are alike in most respects, they will be alike in this one.

REBUTTAL:

There are exceptions to the similarity between these nervous systems.

BACKING:

Other likeness of human and rat nervous systems.

DATA:

Global economies have been perilously affected by COVID-19.

THEREFORE

(WITH THESE QUALIFICATIONS)

CLAIM:

Market volatility will persist for the foreseeable future.

WARRANT:

Argument from cause: infectious disease outbreaks create market instability.

REBUTTAL:

Unless technological developments keep pace with infectious disease.

BACKING:

Volatility during the 1918 flu outbreak.

```
DATA:                                  (WITH THESE              CLAIM:
  Ancient Egyptian,      THEREFORE    QUALIFICATIONS)             People of ancient
  Greek, and Chinese                                              cultures generally
  peoples believed in                                             believed in an
  an afterlife.                                                   afterlife.

                     WARRANT:

                       Argument from example:
                       What is true of the specific
                       is true of the general.          REBUTTAL:

                                                           Unless the available
                                                           evidence is a forgery or
                     BACKING:                              proved false

                       Other consistent patterns
                       across ancient cultures.
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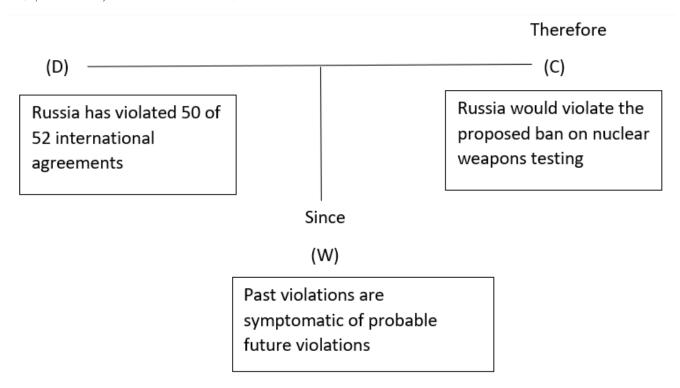
Data, Claim, Warrant

The most fundamental part of the Toulmin Model is the warrant, the data, and the claim. All claims require data. The previous section discussed three kinds of claims: **fact**, **value**, and **policy.** The three parts of the Toulmin Model may be phrased in the following way: on the basis of *this* information (the data), you should reach *this* conclusion (the claim) if you use *this* logical reasoning or connection (the warrant). For example:

Therefore

(D) ——————————————————————— (C)

| Russia has violated 50 of 52 international agreements | | Russia would violate the proposed ban on nuclear weapons testing |

Since

(W)

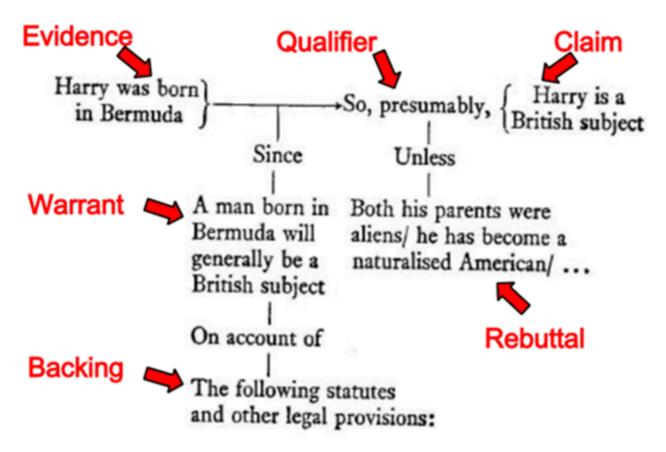| Past violations are symptomatic of probable future violations |

One of Toulmin's own examples

This claim is connected to data by way of a logical warrant. In this case, the data or the evidence is that Russia has violated fifty of fifty-two international agreements. Because of this information, we should conclude that Russia would violate a proposed ban on nuclear weapons testing that we are considering right now. The connection between these two elements is the following warrant; that the past is a predictor of the future. Since past violations are symptomatic of probable future violations, we can assume that the claim is true. All of these elements taken together would read in the following way:

> On the basis of the information that Russia has violated fifty of fifty-two existing international agreements, we should conclude that Russia would violate the proposed ban on nuclear weapons testing. We should reach this conclusion using the reasoning that past violations are symptomatic of probable future violations.

In the real world, it's important to note that warrants often go unstated. They're usually assumed, or the logical connection between the data and the claim simply is not set out correctly.

Backing, Qualifier, Rebuttal

The secondary elements of the Toulmin Model are the *backing*, the *qualifier*, and the *rebuttal*.

Toulmin, Stephen E.. The Uses of Argument. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pg.97.

- The *backing* refers to the support for the warrant. It describes the assurance that the warrant is authoritative or current. We can know for instance that the past isn't just true for Russian treaty agreements, it's true under other circumstances as well.
- The *qualifier* is a statement that reduces the strength of the claim. It indicates the strength conferred by the warrant, and claims can be qualified with terms like usually, possibly, likely, in all probability, presumably, and always. The qualifier specifically reduces the strength of the claim that we've been considering by making it conditional or probabilistic.
- The *rebuttal* is a counterargument that invalidates the claim. This counterargument might be certain circumstances in which the general authority of a warrant should be set aside. If for instance, there has never been a historical precedent for what we're up against today, the past might not be a good predictor of the future.

If we think about all of these different elements working together, using the example through the previous slide, it might look something like this.

On the basis of the evidence that Russia has violated fifty out of fifty-two of its past agreements, we should conclude it would violate the treaty that is in front of it right now. This is good reasoning because we know the

past is a good predictor of the future. We know that the past is the predictor of the future because there are many other instances of history repeating itself. Of course, it is possible that Russia might not violate the treaty, but if so, this would only be the third time that Russia would have complied with an international agreement.

Because Harry was born in Bermuda, we can conclude that Harry is a British subject, since a person born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject. Moreover, we can know that a person born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject on account of existing statutes and other legal provisions. So presumably, Harry is a British subject, unless, of course, both his parents were aliens or he has become a naturalized American.
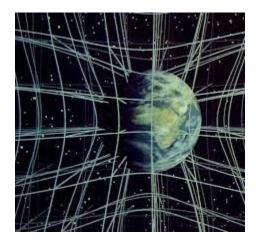
Next, let's consider warrants more closely. There are many kinds. Warrants are the connection between a data and a claim, between evidence and the argument that we're making.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=178#oembed-7*

Deductive reasoning argues from general or well-accepted premises to concrete cases. The syllogism, discussed in an earlier section of this chapter, is an example of deductive reasoning because it begins with a major premise that is presumed to be generally true. It then leverages a hypothesis (the minor premise) to reach a conclusion. Although deduction is often associated with the scientific method of hypothesis-testing, deductive reasoning need not begin from a science-based major premise. To engage in deductive reasoning, one may start from a major premise based in fact, value, or law to make a claim about a particular, as-yet unexplained case. Deduction, in a nutshell, argues from what is already understood to be true or factual and moves from this true statement to a particular circumstance in which the truth of that major premise may be evaluated and refined. When we talk about *deductive warrants*, we are describing a logical move of argumentation that takes us from something well established to a particular circumstance that supports the truth of this well established claim.
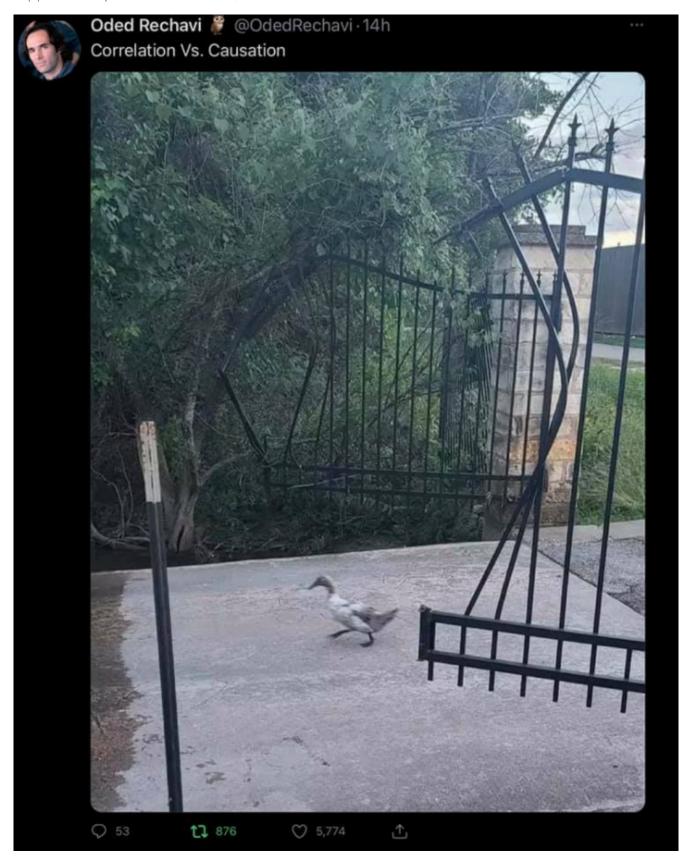
- Major Premise: Gravity acts upon all bodies with mass.
- Minor Premise: Photons (light) do not have mass.
- Conclusion: Gravity does not act upon photons (light).

Ultimately, the deductive conclusion provided above is not completely correct. [Gravity does have an effect upon light](), although this is not because light has mass! This has led to a refinement of the major premise: Because light has no mass, gravity does not affect light directly. instead, gravity affects the space-time through which photons travel. This results in the 'warping' or 'bending' of light through space, even though gravity does not act upon photons themselves.

Inductive reasoning argues from specific cases to general conclusions. When you're faced with a situation in which you have knowledge or information about a specific number of cases, but you lack an understanding of the "global" or "overaching" factors that might unite those cases, inductive reasoning is what allows you to make that leap. If *deductive reasoning* is "top down" (from the most general to the most specific) then *inductive reasoning* is "bottom up" (from the most specific to the most general). If you live someplace with a view of the street and you see that 8/10 people walking on the street are wearing facemasks, inductive reasoning would allow you to reach the conclusion that mask compliance in your town is approximately 80%. Inductive reasoning would allow you to reach that conclusion, even if it is note entirely reliable (unless, of course, you live in a very small town).

This kind of causal logic is a causal generalization. This example is about medical care at the university. It is a well-accepted premise that reducing the choice of medication for generic brands will create negative health outcomes, and so here at this particular university, a transition to a health plan with less coverage will negatively impact graduate students on campus. Because we widely know that the transition of generic drugs has negative health outcomes, in this particular circumstance at this university, we can infer that the same cause-effect relationship would hold in place, making this a deductive cause. As causal correlation, the logic of cause can be inductive, showing from a specific case how a more general consequence will follow, and as a deductive case, showing how a general pattern of cause and effect will show up in local or particular circumstances.

I'd like to talk very briefly about the relationship between signs and causes as different kinds of warrants and

to distinguish them from one another a little bit more closely. Signs and causes are easy to confuse, they fall often into the same sort of category, and they do differ depending on the kind of evidence that is being brought to bear on a given claim. On the exam, you can expect to see a question that provides data, claim, and a warrant, and you'll be asked to identify what the warrant is. And so, a sign is the logic that where there's smoke, there's fire. How do we know that there's a problem there? What is the sign, what is the symptom that is out there that shows us that a problem exists? When we're talking about causes, we're talking about the origin of the problem. Where did it start from, where it began. And so if our claim is about dinosaur extinction, we could say that, on the one hand, a very big asteroid caused an enormous shock, that created their extinction, or on the other hand, we could say that we know that the dinosaurs went extinct, because we have geological evidence from the crater impact zone, which is like the smoke from the fire, the thing that reminds us of what happened there, as opposed to the thing that happened. If our claim was about the ballooning national deficit, the thing that caused that deficit is multiple increases in the national debt ceiling. Whereas the sign of a ballooning national deficit is lower bond returns and a widening gap between the lower and middle class. Again, these are symptoms, rather than the cause of the looming national deficit.

If we're talking about how the cause of a specific pandemic disease is ultimately a virus, a fungus, or a bacteria that has not been contained, but we know that it's out there, we know that there's smoke that is showing us that it's out there, that, based on population levels, and symptoms of illness.

Inductive Warrants: Example, Analogy, and Causal Correlation

Two kinds of inductive warrants include *example* and *analogy*.

> **Examples** are *inductive* warrants in which what is true of the specific is true of the general.

For instance, consider the claim "the people of ancient cultures believed in an afterlife." The data is that the Egyptians believed in an afterlife, which is shown by their funeral preparations. Plato's writings also indicate that the ancient Greeks believed in an afterlife. And so the connection between the general belief in an afterlife is supported by two pieces of data: the Egyptians and Plato. What is true of the specific is true of the general: two cases indicate that ancient peoples believed in an afterlife, so more generally, people of ancient cultures must have believed in it as well.

> **Analogies** are inductive warrants in which if two things are alike in most respects, they will be alike in a general sense.

Consider the following claim: If exposed to Nerve Agent 274, then 90% of all humans will die because a similar proportion of rats died in experimental trials. The data for this claim is that rats are mammals and possess a nervous system that resembles a human's in most respects. The relationship between the claim about humans

potentially dying from this nerve agent, and the evidence, (a comparison between rats and humans) is that if these two things are alike in most respects, they will be alike in this respect. And thus, it forms a connective logic that takes specific cases and draws a general conclusion.

> **Causal correlations** are inductive warrants in which "if an increase in X leads to an increase in Y, then a decrease in X should lead to a decrease in Y."

For instance, if an increasing in indoor masking and vaccination leads to an increase in the number of people who have natural immunity to a given infectious disease, then causal correlation would tell us that a decrease in indoor masking and vaccination status would lead to a decrease in this same immunity. Correspondingly, if an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels leads to higher global temperatures, then a decrease in atmospheric carbon dioxide would lead to a decrease in global temperatures. The warrant from causal correlation is inductive because a particular link between X and Y allows us to reach a more general conclusion: namely, other related linkages between these two variables.

Deductive Warrants: Sign and Causal Generalization

Two kinds of *deductive warrants* include *signs* and *causes*.

> **Signs** are deductive warrants where evidence is a verified general indicator of something beyond itself.

The logic of the sign resembles the "index" discussed in the chapter on "the symbol." The claim that "where there's smoke, there's fire" relies on a sign: the smoke is a verified, general indicator of something beyond itself: fire. Similarly, economists long ago pointed to positive purchasing trends in low-cost food items ([such as Kraft Macaroni and Cheese](#)) as a sign of imminent economic downturn. Mass purchases of Mac n' Cheese indicate something beyond the evidence: that a recession is on the horizon. A final example is if your instructor comes into class flustered, it may signal that they are underprepared for class. It may or may not be true – your instructors may be having a difficult day due to family, job, or health problems – but the logical conclusion is deductive because you, as an observer, are making a claim based on what you perceive to be general indicators.

> **Causal Generalizations** are deductive warrants when, given a recognizable cause, we can infer a particular effect or consequence.

When it is *deductive*, this kind of causal logic is called a *causal generalization*. For instance, rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are a clear cause of the "greenhouse effect," which leads to global warming. Because carbon dioxide levels verifiably lead to this consequence, we can make the causal generalization that an observable increase in these gasses will yield a predictable result.

Another example of causal generalizations might be about medical care at the university. It is a well accepted premise that narrowing the availability of generic brand medication causes greater negative health outcomes.

At our particular university, a transition to a health plan with less coverage of generic brands will negatively impact the health of students on campus. Because this cause-effect relationship is verifiable and generally true, it would make it true att our university, making it a deductive causal generalization.

Separating Signs from Causes

It is easy to confuse signs with causal generalizations, although they are different kinds of warrants. Ultimately, the deductive logic of **the sign** is asking about a confirmed *symptom:* "where there is smoke (the symptom) there is fire (the disease). The deductive logic of **causal generalization** refers to an *origin:* where did a given thing-in-the-world start or begin? Let's consider a few examples:

Let's say that we are considering a claim about dinosaur extinction.

- A **causal generalization** might argue that a very big asteroid was the origin of a catastrophic global shock that resulted in extinction. Because we know that A (the asteroid) causes B (global extinction events) we can say that this cause resulted in that effect for the dinosaurs.
- A **sign** might point to geological evidence from the crater impact zone that indicates an inhabitable environment for oxygen-breathing creatures, such as residues of ancient carbon monoxide. Because we know that this sign (carbon signatures) are an indicator of something beyond itself (an unbreathable environment) we can say that this evidence points to the reason megafauna no longer walk the earth.

Another way to separate signs from causes is to consider the ballooning national deficit.

- A **causal generalizatio**n might point to repeated increases in the national debt ceiling, which is the literal, most immediate 'cause' of this debt.
- A **sign-based argument** might point to lower bond returns and a widening gap between the lower and middle class as indicators that debt has gotten out of control.

A third example is pandemic diseases.

- There are limited **general causes** for a pandemic disease: a virus, a fungus, or a bacteria.
- The **signs** of a pandemic disease are literal symptoms as well as changes in employment, hospitalization, and mortality rates.

Finally, let's consider different warrants related to becoming internet-famous.

- We might say that the **general cause** of that internet fame is that you had a very viral post, and then someone confirmed or with many followers retweeted you, and then that spiraled out of control.

- The **sign** that you're internet famous might be that people you don't know on campus come up to you, tweet at you, or start talking to you out of the blue.

The difference between sign and causal generalization is the difference between symptoms and origins. A sign points to an indicator of the claim that you're trying to make, whereas a causal generalization points to a cause-effect relationship.

Complicating Toulmin, Anticipating Rebuttals

Ultimately, the Toulmin Model is useful not just because it lets us map our arguments, but because it helps us to anticipate how others will respond to our claims based on the intrinsic weakness of an argument. Recall, arguments are designed to be *contestable* even though they often begin from well-established or proven grounds. As indicated in the diagram below, there are a number of standard ways to respond to a given claim:

- A *claim* may be either too extreme or unclear.
- A *warrant* may make too big of a leap, it may lack backing, or it may just be the wrong warrant for the kind of claim being made.
- *Evidence* may not have been collected correctly, there may be too much evidence to reach a good conclusion, or there may be too little evidence to support the claim.
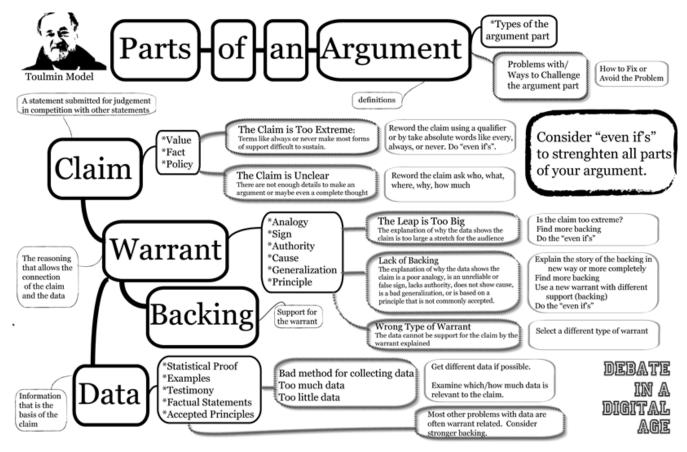
Diagram of Toulmin components and responses developed by media studies scholar Dan Faltesek

Clearly, this can get complicated. The point is that the Toulmin Model is a way to diagnose and strengthen your individual arguments, to anticipate what others will find wrong with them, and how to respond before someone raises an objection.

Part 3: Logical Dependency and Fallacies

This final section is about large-scale structures of argument that span the length f an entire book or essay. These include the logically independent and dependent structures. The last section of this essay is about bad arguments and fallacies and how to diagnose when arguments go wrong.

The Dependency Model is an alternative to the Toulmin Model. Dependency establishes two kinds of relationship between the thesis and the sub-claims of a speech or an essay. Whereas the Toulmin Model posits the warrant as the connection between a claim and it's evidence, the logical Dependency Model posits two kinds of connection between **a thesis** and **supporting claims**. Like the Toulmin Model, logical dependency offers a way to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of an argument based on its overall structure, or how the different arguments are linked together.

Logically Dependent and Independent Arguments

The two kinds of dependency are **logically dependent** and **logically independent**. The dependency structures can be imagined as a circuit because they arrange claims either in a series (dependent) or in parallel (independent):

Logically Dependent	Logically Independent
Thesis: A condensed syllogism.	Thesis: A is a general category with subcategories BCD
A = D Koalas are a dangerous species.	A: Koalas are a dangerous species
A = B Koalas thrive on eucalyptus	B: Koalas eat their young
B = C Eucalyptus is invasive and the Koala population can grow a lot.	C: Koalas wage war on other marsupials
C = D Koala overpopulation is dangerous for the larger ecosystem.	D: Koalas are carriers of disease

The **logically dependent** argument begins next to the plus or minuses: the thesis or "source". It then moves from argument to argument, one building after the other, toward the conclusion. The thesis in a logically dependent structure is a condensed version of the entire argument as it unfolds from paragraph to paragraph. If one of the "lights" (supporting arguments) along the circuit fails, then the entire circuit (the thesis/total argument) ceases to function.

> *In the logically dependent example provided above, the thesis is that "koalas are a dangerous species." To arrive at this conclusion, we have to go through a series of steps: First, koalas thrive on eucalyptus; second, because eucalyptus is an invasive species of plant, it can lead to koala overpopulation; and finally, koala overpopulation spells danger for a larger ecosystem. However, if one of the claims is proven false (e.g. eucalyptus is NOT an invasive species) then the entire argument fails.*

In the **logically independent** model the thesis still starts at the source, but then offers three separate criteria or pieces of evidence that support the original claim. The thesis statement is like an umbrella. When we look at it as a drawn out argument, the thesis is a general claim that can be supported by any number of sub-claims that are separate (independent) from it. If one of the "lights" (supporting claims) along the circuit fails, the others may still function.

> In the logically independent example provided above, there are three separate independent reasons that support the claim that koalas are dangerous. Unlike the dependent structure, these supporting arguments do not 'build' upon one another; instead, they stand alone. The first supporting argument is that that koalas eat their young. The second is that koalas wage war on other marsupials. Finally, koalas are carriers of disease. Each offers a different rationale for why koalas pose a real danger. However, if one of the arguments is invalidated (e.g. koalas clearly cannot 'wage war') the other two supporting claims may still stand.

When it comes to writing an *essay,* the structure of logical dependency can help you to scaffold arguments at the level of the *topic sentence.* A thesis should appear in the first paragraph of your essays, laying out your major claim as well as the purpose and overall structure of the paper. Each paragraph can then be organized in either a *dependent* or *independent* manner, building one claim atop another from paragraph to paragraph or, alternatively, providing separate reasons why the thesis should be supported.

Logically Dependent	Logically Independent
Strengths: Allows the arguer to go "in depth" on a claim by providing a stage-by-stage account of its validity.	Strengths: Allows the arguer offer "breadth" about a claim by providing a number of separate reasons why it is to be accepted.
Weaknesses: If any one 'stage' of the argument is falsified or invalidated, the entire argument may be dismissed.	Weaknesses: No one of these sub-claims is fully developed or goes beyond a surface treatment.

Both structures have unique strengths and weaknesses. The strength of the logically dependent series is that it allows the arguer to go into depth with a single claim, by providing a stage-by-stage account of its validity. However the logically dependent series also has a key weakness. If any one stage or piece of the argument is falsified or invalidated, the entire argument may be dismissed.

The most defensible claims use a *hybrid* structure: one that uses both dependent and independent forms of argument. To return to an example from earlier in this chapter, Colin Powell's argument to the UN was organized as a hybrid dependent/independent structure:
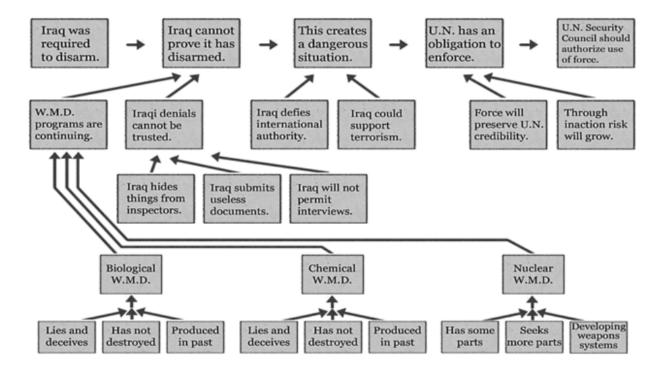
Figure 1. Diagram of Colin Powell's Speech to the United Nations. © The Teaching Company, Chantilly, Virginia, 2005. Reprinted by Permission.

The major claim that runs across the top of this page is *dependent*. Each part builds one part atop another, and each 'step' is required for the ultimate claim (the UN Security Council should authorize the use of force). If one of these top-level claims is invalidated, then the whole argument falls apart.

The substructure below this top line is *independent*. There are a series of separable reasons provided for each claim as a redundancy measure for the dependent claim. For example: the second "step" ("Iraq cannot prove it has disarmed") is supported by two independent supporting claims: ("Weapons of Mass Destruction [WMD] programs are continuing" and "Iraqi denials cannot be trusted"). These claims, in turn, are backed by their own supporting claims (We can know that WMD programs are continuing in the areas of "biological," "chemical," and "nuclear" weapons creation).

It is important to note that just because a claim is *complex* does not mean it is *true*. Ultimately, Powell was incorrect about the stockpiling of WMDs in Iraq: investigators found no evidence that this was ever occurring. Additionally, the UN Security Council did not find Powell's claims compelling because they were based on uncertainties about Iraq rather than obvious evidence. In the end, even Powell said that his speech was "a great intelligence failure" based on unsupported evidence and inadequate sourcing.

Fallacies of Reason

Next, we are going to talk about logical fallacies. Once again, please remember that all the powerpoints displayed in this lecture are available on canvas if you experience poor video quality. There are several videos in this next section. The first thing that I want to show you here is the ad hominem fallacy, one of the most common fallacies that we know of. This video will explain not only what it is, but also sub variants and sub categories of the ad hominem fallacy.

> 🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* [*https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=178#oembed-8*](https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=178#oembed-8)

Beyond the *ad hominem,* fallacies are generally incorrect forms of reasoning. Typically, when someone uses a fallacies, it is grounds to call them out for using a bad warrant, or incorrectly making a connection between claims and evidence.

[There are many fallacies of reason.](#) Here are few common variations:

- The argument **ad hominem**, which we just explored, is an attack on the person rather than engagement with the argument. It's a deflection from the claim by talking about the character of the people who are making the claims.
- The argument **ad populum** employ the bandwagon fallacy. It establishes that if a majority of people are doing something, we should do it too.
- The **straw man** argument is a reduction of an opposing argument. It takes issue with a very narrow or specific piece of someone's argument and then blows it up as if it is the entire argument that the person is making. So by reducing the position to a non-representative claim or to a single sentence or single word in an arguer's argument, the straw man fallacy allows the arguer to take up a position of strength by making an over claim about what the opponent is actually saying.
- The **slippery slope** fallacy is a way of connecting evidence through an unbacked causal chain. A leads to B leads to C leads to D, but the connection between these points is assumed rather than proven. Because the causal chain is very weak, one thing rests upon another thing, rests upon another thing, rests upon another thing so that ultimately it leads to some devastating consequence.
- The **non-sequiter** fallacy is one in which the claim does not follow from the evidence. Non-sequiter literally means "does not follow," in which the connection between an argument and its data is absurd, satirical, or nonsensical.
- The **false dilemma** is an option of A or B. It forces a choice between two options as though there is no option except for these two. In fact, there may be a third or a fourth option. Here is an example of the

false dilemma in action:

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Fallacies are arguments that are made in a way that makes us want to believe them, but at the same time, use shortcuts or use connections between evidence that are inappropriate or not as rigorous as they should be. But even though we can see arguments as bad in this way, they are more and more common. This is especially in advertisements, which use fallacies as a recognizable form of reason, thereby allowing the audience to be part of the persuasion.

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The Non-Sequiter

This Doritos ad employs the non-sequitur because it descends into absurdity when demonstrating the lengths to which people will go for their chips.

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The Slippery Slope

In this case, the viewing audience can identify with the reasoning, even as we recognize that it is flawed. The slippery slope allows one thing to lead to another and another until "you" end up with an eye patch. As a technique for advertising, we are all in on the joke. The commercial doesn't try to sell us on the product as much as it tries to create a shared experience of absurdity for the seller and the viewer.

The point here is that advertisements in general allow us to identify with bad reasoning. Fallacies are indeed flawed arguments, but insofar as they are common modes of reasoning, they can also allow us to connect with the message on the basis that we are all in the know. They are not just ways to dismiss incorrect claims; they are ways of leveraging claims that are recognizable to a wide audience.

Additional Resources

- Besel, Richard D. "Accommodating climate change science: James Hansen and the rhetorical/political emergence of global warming." *Science in Context* 26.1 (2013): 137-152.
- Besel, Richard D. "Opening the "black box" of climate change science: Actor-network theory and rhetorical practice in scientific controversies." *Southern Communication Journal* 76.2 (2011): 120-136.
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- Greene, Ronald Walter, and Darrin Hicks. "Lost convictions: Debating both sides and the ethical self-fashioning of liberal citizens." *Cultural studies* 19.1 (2005): 100-126.
- Goodnight, G. Thomas. "The personal, technical, and public spheres of argument: A speculative inquiry into the art of public deliberation." *The Journal of the American Forensic Association* 18.4 (1982): 214-227.
- Goodnight, G. Thomas, and John Poulakos. "Conspiracy rhetoric: From pragmatism to fantasy in public discourse." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45.4 (1981): 299-316.
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- Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. "Justifying the war in Iraq: What the Bush administration's uses of evidence reveal." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10.2 (2007): 249-273.
- Kelley-Romano, Stephanie. "Trust no one: The conspiracy genre on American television." *Southern Communication Journal* 73.2 (2008): 105-121.
- Palczewski, Catherine Helen, et al. "Chapter 4 Argument." *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, Strata Pub., State College, PA, 2012: 99–127.

CHAPTER 8: RHETORIC AND NARRATIVE

An artistic rendering of the pivotal scene from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Purloined Letter"

This chapter discusses the relationship between rhetoric and *narratives* in three parts. The first introduces key concepts related to narratives, including the **inside/outside** of narratives, **form**, **genre**, and **narrative frame theory**. The second section of the chapter addresses Walt Fisher's **narrative paradigm** and the concepts of **narrative coherence** and **narrative fidelity.** The final section [*recording forthcoming*] describes the narratives that facilitate "speaking for others" and intersectional correctives to hegemonically white, cis-gender, and upper-middle-class narrative point-of-view.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the

headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: [Form, Genre, and Frame Theory](#) (Video, ~12m)
- Part 2: [Narrative Paradigm](#) (Video, ~12m)
- Part 3: The Problem of Speaking for Others [*recording forthcoming*]

Read this Next

- Johnson, Paul Elliott. ["Walter White (ness) lashes out: Breaking Bad and male victimage."](#) *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34.1 (2017): 14-28.

Part 1: Form, Genre, and Frame Theory

Narratives have many different components that make them rhetorically relevant. They are reflections of an audience's values: a story is never *just* a story. They are about the people telling them, about ways of envisioning the future, or about the contemporary problems that those tellers are confronted with.

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Narratives are ways of shaping public memory or retelling events that have happened in the past. They allow us to remember what has happened or to retell these moments as alternate futures. They organize how we interpret public events that we encounter in our everyday lives. Many people have tried to make sense of the Covid-19 pandemic by watching films like Outbreak or Contagion. Narratives also reflect a dominant ideology because they reflect the values not just of the people who create them but of the people who read and watch them, making them a part of their lives.

Inside and Outside

Narratives have an inside and an outside. The inside is usually talked about as the **diegesis**, and the outside is usually talked about as the **extra-diegesis**. In a written narrative, the elements that occur in the timeline of the story form the diegesis. Things that happen in the story but fall outside the scope of the story's events are extra-diegetic. For instance, a story may be about characters whose lives were changed by September 11, 2001. The things that happen to these characters would be part of the *diegesis*. But if September 11, 2001 were not explicitly a part of the story, they would be extra-diegetic if those events occurred before the story ever began. In films, *diegetic* and *non-diegesis* sound define what is available 'inside' and 'outside' the story. If a character turns on a radio in a film, the sounds are audible to both the characters and the audience, then that sound is *diegetic*. If ominous music plays and is only audible to the audience but not the characters on screen, then that noise would be *extra-diegetic*.

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In the opening moments of the film *Jaws*, the diegetic sound consists of the splashes of characters swimming through the water; you can hear the water as if you were yourself swimming. But the extra-diegetic noise starts when the familiar "Jaws" theme starts playing. It's not audible to the characters; it's only audible to the people watching. For that reason, we can say that it is "outside" of the narrative.

In the opening moments of the film *Jaws*, the diegetic sound consists of the splashes of characters swimming through the water; you can hear the water as if you were yourself swimming. But the extra-diegetic noise starts

when the familiar "Jaws" theme starts playing. It's not audible to the characters; it's only audible to the people watching. For that reason, we can say that it is "outside" of the narrative.

Narrative Time

Narrative *time* describes the way that stories are ordered as a progression of events. Sometimes the order in which the story is told is not identical to the linear progression of time. Narratives may begin *in medias res*, where events are already happening or have already happened. They both happen step-by-step and as an overall 'arc' that connects the beginning to the end. They happen as brief moments of surprise and opportunity and as the unfolding of deeply plotted events.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=184#oembed-1*

- **Fabula** describes the chronological sequence of events in a narrative. Sometimes stories are told from beginning to end, without any detours. Not all stories are told linearly, however. Many stories involve flashbacks or prolepsis (a foreshadowing or *flash-forwards*). Sherlock Holmes, a detective fiction, is a story that is famous for taking the reader through a chronological sequence of events only to route them to an earlier moment in time when the detective explains their deductive reasoning. The *fabula* is the timeline that we would construct if we were to untangle all of the events in the narrative, creating a timeline that puts them back in their linear order from beginning to end. The sequence of the *fabula* may or may not correspond with how the narrator actually tells the story.

  In the example video above, a series of events unfolds "out of order," which only becomes apparent at the end. If we were to put all of these events into the first-second-third linear sequence in which they happened, this would be the fabula [Spoiler warning]: [extra-diegetically] the main character had and raised a child, they grew apart, and the child left, dramatically. Then [diegetically] the character made a bao bun and fanticized that the bao became a child, that she raised the bao, and eventually the bao decided to leave in dramatic fashion. She then eats the bao. As she is crying in bed, the main character's son returns and offers some pastries. The two eat the pastries and cry together. The final scene depicts the main character, her partner, her child, and her child's new partner all in the home making baos together.

- **Sjuzhet** describes the re-presentation of those events in whatever sequence the narrative presents them. In other words, if the events in the narrative occur in first, second, third order, then that is the *sjuzhet.* If the narrative begins in the middle, returns us to the past, and takes us to the end, then that is the *sjuzhet.* If the narrative is a collection of different stories that start and end at overlapping times, then

that is the *sjuzhet*. It is time in the narrative voice of the story as it is told.

In the example video above, the story begins with the main character making bao buns. The bao turns into a baby, which the main character cares for. The bao starts to grow. Over time, the bao grows apart from the main character until one day, the bao decides it is time to depart. They have a heated argument, and prevents the bao from leaving. She then eats the bao. As she is crying in bed, the main character's son returns and offers some pastries. The two eat the pastries and cry together. The final scene depicts the main character, her partner, her child, and her child's new partner all in the home making baos together.

- **Metonymy** as a *narrative trope* describes the moment-to-moment slippage in a story. Every story is composed of one or many scenes. The metonymic movement of the story is how the story moves from scene to scene, from moment to moment over the narrative's duration.

  More traditionally, metonymy is a <u>rhetorical</u> trope, having to do more with speech than with narrative. It is often described as a "part" standing in for the object itself. For instance, the phrase "all hands on deck" substitutes a part of a sailor for sailors themselves. The phrase "the oval office" substitutes a part of the White House for the institution it represents. The key connection between narrative and rhetorical metonomy is the slip from part to object. In rhetoric, metonymy slips from one part of the object to a name by which it is more conventionally known. In narrative, metonymy slips from one moment of the story into another, which is different but related to the one that came before.

- **Metaphor** as a *narrative trope* describes the overall slippage of a story, its total narrative arc. It is how a beginning transforms into an end, putting these two distinct moments into a concrete relationship with one another. For example, in the original *Star Wars* series, the narrative trope of metaphor describes the overall transformation of Luke Skywalker from a Tatooine farmer into a swashbuckling, empire-defeating, Oedipus-complex-confronting Jedi.

  As a <u>rhetorical</u> trope, metaphor puts A into a relationship with B such that some qualities of A are transferred onto B. Narrative does this with a central character, idea, or protagonist. If something lasts from the beginning to the end of a story, it will have some of the same qualities, but will also in most cases have dramatically transformed.

Metaphor as a transformation of beginnings into ends.

- **Kairos** is a rhetorical term that signifies "the opportune moment." To be aware of and use kairos means that one has an awareness of their situation and has the ability to respond to it with words. In narratives, kairos signifies the sudden and the surprising. It is the organization of narrative as a "now," in the sense of an episode in a larger drama or a striking moment during which dramatic tension may resolve. For example, Dr. Megan Foley argues that the O.J. Simpson trial's news portrayal employed a "kairotic" temporality because it "seized the present moment to craft a usable past" about racism in the courtroom.

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- **Chronos** is a rhetorical term that describes the deep time in which events unfold. It is the overall time of the narrative and the past and future that extend beyond the narrative's boundaries. Dr. Emily Winderman argues that the TLC television show *A Baby's Story* uses a chronic temporality because each episode tells a story in which the viewer is led to anticipate the family's completion. The introduction of a newborn provides narrative resolution to birthing drama.

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Kairos is the time of contingency; chronos is the time of history. Kairos is a sense of time as occasion; chronos is a sense of time as duration. Kairos figures time as an episodic point; chronos figures time in a sequential line. Kairos emphasizes that rhetoric hinges on timely opportune moments; chronos emphasizes rhetoric's historical contextualization (Foley 2010, p.71)

Formal and Aesthetic Elements

Narratives also have formal and aesthetic elements. **Formal elements** are those that structure the narrative. **Aesthetic elements** are those that occur in narrative because of the cultural context of the story. For example, the *plot* is a formal narrative element because it places the characters on a path that will eventually lead to some kind of resolution. There is typically one or more dilemmas that the characters must confront. Their (in)ability to resolve this conflict is what brings the narrative to its ultimate conclusion. By contrast, *characters* are often aesthetic elements of the narrative. Character development describes the actions and relationships among actors in a story, which is often derived from a specific cultural context. Because characters are often reflections of the time and place represented in the story, they will also reflect the values and virtues of the time in which it is set. The professions of different characters can often seem dated or timeless. In *Oedipus Rex*, the blind seer Tiresias is a strange character for a contemporary audience because it emerges from a unique cultural context. A related figure that we might see in narratives today (e.g., economists, risk assessors, or therapists) will likely appear similarly dated from a future point in human history.

Formal and Generic Elements

Narratives are also categorized and reshaped by genre or conventions that allow stories to be widely recognizable and appreciated by wide audiences. Genres create a pattern of expectation, such that some of the best stories make us question our expectations of what the characters will do or make us jump with a twist ending. Both "form" and "genre" refer to ways of organizing narrative. So, what is the difference?

Form and *Genre* are two important ways of describing the recognizable organization of narratives. According to the description provided here, *forms* are the particular logical elements that may occur within a given narrative, *genres* are arrangements of those elements as recognizable kinds of narrative.

Forms are akin to the building blocks of narrative. They are durable, repeatable elements that may appear as features within many different narratives. Form arrange symbols and organize language in ways that give it a

recognizable and repeatable order, like a figure of speech. Forms can build tension and alert you to the fact that a "scary" sequence of events is taking place. In the video below, the *musical form* of "the four-chord song" uses a similar sequence of notes, played at a variety of tempos, to create a range of different songs.

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Within narratives, forms are small-scale ways of arranging action and organizing language, giving these a recognizable logical order. It can also be understood as a repeatable sequence or as a figure of speech. Forms can be picked up and then used in a variety of different contexts. They are also ambivalent concerning the ethical or political goals that they serve. Studying form alone cannot tell us which forms are correct or better or worse. Instead, they serve a number of different purposes. When studying forms, we have to think about where and how these forms are being used. The following video offers an excellent example of forms and how they may be picked up, repeated, and recur in many different texts. Minimally, forms can accomplish two functions: (1) they can create the same meaning using different messages, and (2) they can create different meanings using the same messages.

(1) Forms can create the same meaning across different messages. For example, the "distracted boyfriend meme" may be understood as a form when we witness the same elements in a similar arrangement within a different image or text. This meme has a precursor from *The Killers,* a film from 1946. When we recognize the similarities between these images, we can see how a similar meaning occurs in very different messages whose creation is separated by over 70 years. In a nutshell: form is a way to create the same meaning across different messages.

(2) Forms can also create different meanings using the same message. Often, memes are useful for exactly this reason: they allow us to communicate various messages using the same format or template. The image below is of Brittany Broski, the star of the "Kombucha Girl" meme. On the left, Broski's signature facial expressions carry the captions "We need to have a talk" and "We need to have a taco." But this form, the very same image, can carry a different meaning as well. The image on the left shows Broski's face both disgusted at climate change and optimistic at the prospect of doing something about it. In this case, "Kombucha Girl" produces a form that creates different meanings using the same message, the same template.

Genres are names for categories of narrative. Genres emerge when some number of forms appear together as a consistent feature among different narratives. They may also change over time, as different genres sometimes merge to form new categories of common storytelling. (For example, "horror-comedy" and "dramedy" are recent examples of how distinct genres of narrative have come together to create new formal unities).

Genres are constellations of formal elements. They are not identical to form because they assemble forms and materialize when several different forms cluster together. When we watch a horror film such as *The Shining,* many formal features come together to create a widely recognizable contribution to the genre of horror films. The music, images of large unoccupied spaces, characters running or limping across the screen with weapons, the voice-over about people in isolation experiencing a mental breakdown, and of course Jack Nicholson's changing demeanor all indicate that watching the film will be a frightening experience.

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Genres also set audience expectations about coherence and resolution. When we watch a movie that belongs to

a certain genre, we have expectations associated with it. When those expectations are violated, different things can happen: we might not enjoy ourselves because the movie isn't the one we hoped to see. It might create a *new* genre by blending existing formal elements. Genres also structure the interpretation and reception of public events according to the interests of a dominant culture and ideology.

When the formal elements of a genre are re-configured, they create *new* kinds of stories. Below, you'll find an example of genre expectation violation. Extra-diegetic elements like the music and the narrator's voice interrupt what we would expect. If form describes the interchangeable, repeatable organization of narrative elements, then genres describe a constellation of forms that cluster together to tell stories in recognizable ways.

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Narrative Frames

Narrative frames are ways that public events are constructed through a narrative. Two critical communication theorists use "frame" to describe narratives: Kenneth Burke and Shanto Iyengar**.**

Comic and Tragic Frames

Kenneth's frames are borrowed from Aristotle. They are the comic frame and the tragic frame. For Burke, the same story can be told as a comedy or a tragedy. The difference lies in how we see the motives of the characters.

- **The comic frame** is a viewpoint that would have you see others as mistaken rather than evil. In the clip below from *Veep,* Selena Meyer and her aides are incapable of doing their jobs, which is the main reason why you can see them as mistaken rather than as terrible people.

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- **The tragic frame** is a viewpoint that would have you see others as evil rather than mistaken as calculating or as deliberately as deceitful. Here's a similar clip from the television show "House of

Cards," representing the executive branch doing despicable things. The calculative and manipulative characters displayed here are deliberately immoral and are "tragic" because they are fully aware of the consequences of their actions.

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Episodic and Thematic Frames

Shanto Iyengar's media frames account for how news stories are repeated and told in a political context. It is traditionally understood in terms of the way that news stories are organized. The clip below captures both the "episodic" and the "thematic" frame as they appear in the political campaign speeches of several candidates in the 2012 presidential election.

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- The **episodic frame** depicts public issues in concrete instances or public events; the episodic "makes for good pictures." Its key characteristic is the snapshot or the close-up. It is about isolated events disconnected from a greater context. They are "human interest stories" that are reducible to the motives of individual actors. Something surprising has happened or is happening, but for no particular reason other than the psychology of the people involved.

  In the example above, the episodic frame condenses what we know about a person by using names like "Joe the plumber" or "Mayor Pete." It is about singular individuals and events and doesn't offer a larger context to develop their importance or relevance.

- The **thematic frame** places public issues in some general context. They establish a history and structure that has allowed the events to occur the way they have. Often, thematically framed narratives take the form of a "takeout" or "background" report directed at the general outcomes of policy or event. The thematic frame would, for example, draw attention to conditions of gentrification as the reason for greater homelessness or stock buybacks as the explanation for mass layoffs. This mode of telling suggests

 some greater reason that would explain why things are as they are.

In the example above, the thematic frame describes the structural and economic reasons for educational cutbacks, job loss, and health insurance. In the case of prisons, a thematic frame would point to the racial, social, and economic conditions that make such institutions profitable or which dispose certain communities to be policed at significantly higer rates.
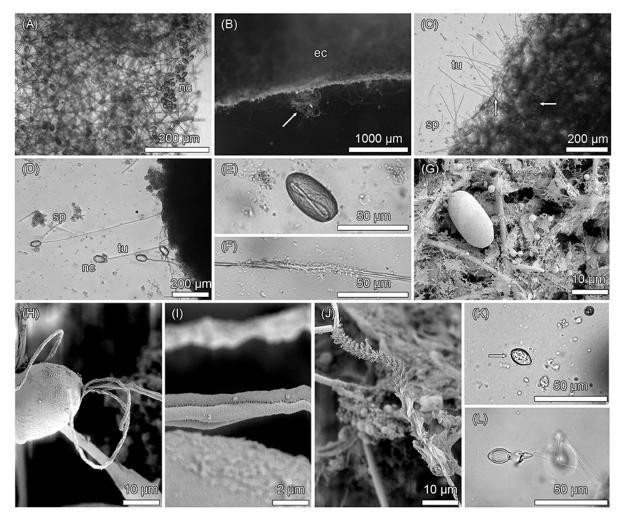
Part 2: The Narrative Paradigm

A Lecture by Dr. Emily Winderman

   The narrative paradigm is Walter Fisher's theory of narrative. This section is about defining the narrative paradigm and will contrast this framework with the rational world paradigm. Then when we think about what makes a narrative persuasive. Rhetorically we will draw upon two key concepts: narrative coherence and narrative fidelity.

What is a Paradigm?

A paradigm is a conceptual framework, a universal model that calls people to view events as an interpretive lens for events around them. A paradigm is like a magnifying glass: different magnification levels might lead you to see a similar phenomenon in different ways. The rational world paradigm is one magnifying glass among many others that allow us to interpret and see and make meaning about what's going on in our world. So, it's not belief-based, really, but more of a question of epistemology or how we know what we know. So how do we know what we know? We know it through stories.

[Haliclona cnidata](#) at multiple magnifications. [CC BY 4.0](#)

In Ancient Greece, a philosophical paradigm was privileged over a rhetorical paradigm. That's why the sophists really were castigated for their elevation of the rhetorical ways of knowing and being in the world. Many people operate according to a scientific and rational world paradigm. Of course, that's not "everyone" because people obviously can and do reject scientific facts. Such people are acting according to a different narrative paradigm. Nevertheless, the national world paradigm tends to be privileged most in our society right now.

The Narrative Paradigm

Walter Fisher developed the Narrative Paradigm, where he refers to humans as storytelling animals. The idea of storytelling animals really just says that storytelling is so foundational to what it means to be humans that it might as well be as if we were barking dogs (aka storytelling animals). He doesn't believe that stories are an instrumental form of rhetoric that you either bring a list of statistics or a good narrative story like you may have

learned in your public speaking class. On the other hand, Fisher believes that all types of communication are in and of themselves a type of story or narrative. So for him, the narrative is absolutely foundational to rhetorical and communication. Humans are narrative beings who experience and understand life as a series of ongoing narratives. So what is a narrative for Fisher? It's pretty similar to what you might expect. It's symbolic action – words and or deeds that have sequence and meaning for all of those who live, create and interpret them.

So first, what are the components of a story? There are characters: the protagonist and the antagonist. Some people move the story along, and others perform a requisite amount of emotion. You also have rising action, a climax, falling action, and finally, a moral to the story or a big takeaway that contains a lesson and should impact our future actions.

Comparing Paradigms

Between the rational world paradigm and the narrative paradigm. On the rational world paradigm side, we have that humans are rational creatures who make decisions based on arguments. The speaking situation determines the ways that we make those arguments. Rationality is how we know what we know. Our epistemology is a rational epistemology. We argue based upon good reason, and the world is considered a set of rational puzzles to be rationally resolved. On the other hand, humans are storytellers. We make decisions based on good reasons, which vary based upon any situation. History and culture determine those good reasons. Narrative rationality (what makes a narrative quote on quote good or persuasive) is based on its coherence and fidelity. That means the world is not a set of logical puzzles but rather a set of stories that are constantly creating and recreating our lives.

Key Concepts: Coherence and Fidelity

Narrative rationality describes how to evaluate the worth of a story based upon standards of coherence and fidelity. Coherence is how a story hangs together; fidelity is how, whether, and for whom a story 'rings true'.

Narrative Coherence

Internal consistency with characters acting reliably. The story and the plot itself hang together and make sense. Things don't come unexpectedly. Narrative coherence is the equivalent of making an argument in the rational world paradigm. When the characters behave reliably, the story works, and we trust the plot's consistency. We become extremely wary when details are left out.

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The very fact that the characters themselves, there really aren't any characters. They aren't motivated for good or evil and don't really do what you expect them to do. So a picture of a woman with an open mouth and a rat running over it is not something you would do. This would make part of the narrative unsettling. Most of it is what Gabe said: story or narrative is itself comforting. A horror story disrupts our expectations, making us jump; the absence of incoherence is unsettling and puts the viewer on guard.

Narrative Fidelity

Now we will talk about how narrative fidelity functions, how something rings true. This is where we have consistency or coherence between values embedded in a message and the values that the listener holds. So, there are several criteria. First, the values themselves have to be present in the story. Second, there must be a connection between the value and the story. Third, the outcomes a person may experience if they adhere to those values. Fourth, the consistency of an audience's values to narrative values. Fifth, how the values of a story align with larger public morals to stories. So when we affirm a story to have fidelity, when we say a story rings true, we affirm its shared values and invite ourselves to be influenced by them. So I'm gonna give you another office example that rings so true to me.

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For many faculty members right now, Kevin's story has a lot of fidelity, and probably for you too. You put a lot of work into something and might have been making plans for things, and all of a sudden, the rug is pulled out from underneath you: you just end up slipping on chili you've planned on making for so long. Kevin's misfortune feels like it's familiar. So narrative fidelity is the way that his misfortune is so relatable and rings so true.

Part 3: The Problem of Speaking for Others

The final section of this chapter is about how stories are often told from a limited point of view that shuns other perspectives, modes of storytelling, and experiences. A common criticism of the 1990s television show *Friends,* for example, is that it depicted an unattainable New York City apartment, one with many rooms, appliances, and neighbors who regularly interacted. The main characters of the show are all white, and they lived in lavish circumstances. However, their jobs included a waiter (Rachel), a chef (Monica), a musician/masseuse (Phoebe), an actor (Joey), an information technology (IT) manager (Chandler), and a history professor (Ross). Consider the following passage from Juliet Schor's 1998 *The Overspent American*:

> Part of what's new is that lifestyle aspirations are now formed by different points of reference. For many of us, the neighborhood has been replaced by a community of coworkers, people we work alongside, and colleagues in our own and related professions. And while our real-life friends still matter, they have been joined by our media "friends." (This is true both figuratively and literally–the television show Friends is a good example of an influential media referent.) We watch the way television families live, we read about the lifestyles of celebrities and other public figures we admire, and we consciously and unconsciously assimilate this information. It affects us.
>
> When poet-waiters earning $18,000 a year, teachers earning $30,000, and editors and publishers earning six-figure incomes all aspire to be part of one urban literary referent group, which exerts pressure to drink the same brand of bottled water and wine, wear similar urban literary clothes, and appoint apartments with urban literary furniture, those at the lower economic end of the reference group find themselves in an untenable situation. Even if we choose not to emulate those who spend ostentatiously, consumer aspirations can be a serious reach.
>
> Advertising and the media have played an important part in stretching out reference groups vertically. When twenty-somethings can't afford much more than a utilitarian studio but think they should have a New York apartment to match the ones they see on Friends, they are setting unattainable consumption goals for themselves, with dissatisfaction as a predictable result. When the children of affluent and impoverished households both want the same Tommy Hilfiger logo emblazoned on their chests and the top-of-the-line Swoosh on their feet, it's a potential disaster.

Friends is not just unrealistic; it is one of many stories representing "everyday" people who ignore how unattainable their living circumstances are. These kinds of narratives imagine a predominantly white and wealthy America that does not exist in the United States, making debt creation a natural outcome.

The Problem of Speaking for Others

In the essay ["The Problem of Speaking for Others,"](#) Linda Alcoff questions whether some circumstances warrant a person to speak on someone else's behalf. She begins her essay by acknowledging that at the current moment, "speaking for others is arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate." (6). People speak from

specific positions of class, race, gender, culture, and ability, and a person's position cannot be assumed in advance. Additionally, people in privileged positions speaking for historically oppressed peoples often make matters worse, counterproductively perpetuating oppression. Prompted by the problems mentioned, Alcoff generates two premises (15):

- Premise 1: Positionality and context are always relevant to a message.
- Premise 2: Certain contexts (which are always unpredictable, in some way or another) ally themselves with oppression or resistance to oppression, thus perpetuating inequality.

The first premise requires that the speaker's ethical obligation is to know the person with whom they are speaking to the best of their ability, understanding that elements of their experience and history can and do remain inaccessible. No amount of research reveals someone else's context. The second premise describes the hierarchy of power; it deals with "rituals of speaking," which "are politically constituted by power relations of domination, exploitation, and subordination" (15).

Alcoff distinguishes between "speaking for" and "speaking about" and relies on this phrasing throughout her essay. Alcoff insists that one cannot speak for (or on behalf of) another person without speaking about (or revealing one's own assumptions) them. Likewise, one cannot speak about another person without also speaking *for* them (9). The novel *American Dirt* received such [a negative reception](#) when its first published because its white author spoke about – and in the voice of – Chicano immigrants while using offensive stereotypes and racist imagery. [As Mariana Ortega argues](#), this kind of misrepresentation may stem from "knowing, loving ignorance" on the part of white authors of western European descent. It may be, in other words, that the intentions of the author are to *be* more inclusive or to center Black and Brown voices in their work. However, if this "loving" work is also ignorant with respect to the experiences and positions of those written about, then it is not "loving" because it still has harmful effects.

> Those guilty of this kind of loving, knowing ignorance have learned the main sayings of such well-known feminists of color as hooks, Lorde, and Lugones, and are aware of Spelman's claims about the problems of exclusion in feminist thought. They theorize and make claims about women of color. However, they do not check whether in fact their claims about the experience of women of color are being described with attention to detail and with understanding of its subtleties. In other words, this ignorance goes hand in hand with the production of knowledge about the experience of women of color. The result of this ignorance is that women of color continue to be misunderstood, underrepresented, homogenized, disrespected, or subsumed under the experience of"universal sisterhood" while "knowledge" about them is being encouraged and disseminated and while feminism claims to be more concerned and more enlightened about the relations between white women and women of color.

Alcoff also explains the problems of not speaking for others, including retreating, avoiding responsibility, eschewing criticism, and maintaining immunity.

- First, she argues that if people must tell their own stories (and themselves alone), then the result will be

"a retreat into a narcissistic yuppie lifestyle in which a privileged person takes no responsibility for her society whatsoever" (17). If one can only attest to one's own experiences (which she calls an "illusion"), then that assumes one person's life has no bearing on other people's lives (20).

- Removing oneself from any situation in which one is either listening to or sharing one's story is not a neutral stance because it allows oppression to continue (20). She argues that "[t]he declaration that I 'speak only for myself' has the sole effect of allowing me to avoid responsibility and accountability for my effects on others" (20). Alcoff calls out the problem of this avoidance: "it is both morally and politically objectionable to structure one's actions around the desire to avoid criticism" (22), yet the retreat approach allows just that—an immunity to criticism.

Alcoff then provides four suggestions that one should consider prior to speaking for someone else, including the following:

- Analyze why speaking for someone else is necessary, especially to avoid asserting dominance over the situation.
- Consider our own positions– the stories we tell about ourselves and the racial, cultural, familial, gendered, and ethnic context we come from — without using it as a disclaimer or an excuse.
- "[R]emain open to criticism" (26)
- Analyze the effects of the speech, "where the speech goes and what it does there" (26).

Intersectionality

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Intersectionality refers to a framework developed by Kimberle Crenshaw to understand the ways that structural forces, such as legal institutions, schools, and the health care system, create multiple and overlapping forms of social oppression, specifically against Black girls and women. It is related to narrative because it suggests that telling one's story may be more complex by the many structural factors contributing to their experience. Specifically, gender and race may function in ways that dismiss credibility and ability. Such effects render the experiences of Black women invisible and more subject to public scrutiny, disciplinary action, and policing by the legal system.

Kimberle Crenshaw theorizes intersectionality to account for identities at a structural level. (6) According to Brittany Cooper, "intersectionality's most powerful argument is . . . that institutional power arrangements,

rooted as they are in relations of domination and subordination, confound and constrict the life possibilities of those who already live at the intersection of certain identity categories" (9). This arrangement of power affects the kinds of narratives we can tell about Black, Indigenous, and other minoritized groups in several ways. On the one hand, people who live at the intersection of marginalized race, gender, and class categories are more subjected to harmful stereotypes and discrimination while the reasons for this unequal treatment are made invisible. The stories that are told are often about them but "without" them, in other words, without including their unique voices or perspectives. By contrast, other predominantly white and heterosexual-identifying peoples are made "invisible" because this position is often unacknowledged or unspoken. Narratives are often told from a white and western European perspective, although this positioning goes unacknowledged. [As Crenshaw argues](#):

> Because discursive constructions of whiteness are typically unmarked and unnamed in personal, academic, and public discourse, they present a constellation of challenges for rhetorical scholars who are interested in the ideological role of whiteness in intersecting discourses about race, gender, and class.

Importantly, intersectionality is not a research method because this understanding of the framework threatens to disappear black women (19-20), deemphasizes racism (19-20), and "erase[s] the intellectual labor of [intersectionality's] black women creators" (20). As an alternative, Cooper advocates employing intersectionality "as a conceptual and analytical tool for thinking about operations of power" (21) and as "one of the most useful and expansive paradigms we have" (21). It is a reasoning that should animate our reasons for telling stories and understanding the complexity of Black women's experiences. It can also help us deepen our understanding of the structural factors that place intersecting identities into difficult double-binds where they are deprived of agency and power.

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Secondary Readings

- Johnson, Paul Elliott. ["Walter White (ness) lashes out: Breaking Bad and male](#)

victimage." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34.1 (2017): 14-28

Additional Resources

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- Rushing, Janice Hocker, and Thomas S. Frentz. "The Frankenstein myth in contemporary cinema." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 6.1 (1989): 61-80.
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CHAPTER 9: VISUAL RHETORIC

This chapter describes "visual rhetoric," and is divided into two sections. The first section is about "**visual culture**" and adapts seven premises developed by Dr. Catherine Palczewski, John Fritch, and Richard Ice in their textbook, *Rhetoric in Civic Life*. The second section is about four distinct genres of visual rhetoric: **iconic photographs**, **monumental rhetoric**, **body rhetoric**, and **image events**.

Several parts of the chapter below have been updated since the recording for this chapter was originally created. Part 1 on *Visual Culture* and Part 2 on *Genres of Visual Rhetoric* have several updated examples that do not appear in the recordings below. Unlike the previous chapters, this one is particularly image- and video-dense.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: Visual Culture (Video, ~20m)
- Part 2: Genres of Visual Rhetoric (Video, ~20m)

Read this Next

- Finnegan, C. A. (2010). Studying Visual Modes of Public Address: Lewis Hine's Progressive-Era Child Labor Rhetoric. In S. J. Parry-Giles, & J. M. Hogan (Eds.), *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address* (pp. 250-270). Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444324105.ch10
- Caitlin Frances Bruce (2016) "How Philly Moves": from urban branding to kinesthetic sympathy through an aesthetic of blur, Text and Performance Quarterly, 36:2-3, 115-136, DOI: 10.1080/10462937.2016.1202441

Part 1: Visual Culture

The first section of this chapter answers the following question: In what ways is the contemporary U.S. a **visual culture**? *Visual cultures* are scenes of shared public life where shared meaning is made using images, artwork, and memes. Although social media platforms have made visual representation and persuasion a common part of American public life, U.S. culture has a long history of commemoration, identification, and self-representation through visual imagery. This section presents seven different ways that a visual culture has manifested historically in the United States:

In a Visual Culture, Visual Rhetorics are Common and

Change Forms

First, visuals and technologies of visualization have been around as long as verbal rhetorics, and change forms. Sometimes the images that define a culture shift in meaning over time and over different visual texts. The examples below each capture a similar signature 1950s aesthetic but also demonstrate how the feelings, values, and perspectives upon these aesthetics have shifted over time.

Below, you'll find an example of a real estate advertisement recorded in the 1950s. The technologies used to capture the video, though new at the time, are dated by their graininess and coloration: the quality, sound, and definition of the video are clearly different from today's common digital standards. The video also captures the values of the time in which it was captured. It depicts desirable housing and idealized relationships commensurate with the anticipated viewing audience's wants and values: an upscale community predominantly composed of single, white, and wealthy heterosexual families.

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A second representation of these kinds of homes, families, and values is staged by *The Stepford Wives,* a film first produced in 1975 and then remade again in 2004. Both *The Stepford Wives* (1975) and (2004) are horror films about suburban life. Many of the features present in the above clip are again represented in the film trailer below. However, *The Stepford Wives* replaces the sanitized home aesthetics, conformist sexuality, and community idealism of the 1950s home with the premise about a sinister secret society.

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The television series *Them,* which aired in Spring 2021, makes similar use of horror aesthetics in its depiction of 1950s Compton, CA. This time, 1950s aesthetics combine with secret society motifs to tell the semi-fictional story of the first Black family to enter this once predominantly white neighborhood. In *The Color of Law,* Richard Rothstein describes the realities of 1950s home real estate and the unethical practices associated with "white flight" from California suburbs:

> In 1954, one resident of a whites-only area in East Palo Alto, across a highway from the Stanford campus, sold his house to a black family. Almost immediately Floyd Lowe, president of the California Real Estate

Association, set up an office in East Palo Alto to panic white families into listing their homes for sale, a practice known as blockbusting. Soon, growing numbers of white owners succumbed to the scaremongering and sold at discounted prices to the agents and their speculators. African Americans, desperate for housing, purchased the homes at inflated prices. Within a three-month period, one agent alone sold sixty previously white-owned properties to African Americans. The California real estate commissioner refused to take any action, asserting that while regulations prohibited licensed agents from engaging in "unethical practices," the exploitation of racial fear was not within the real estate commission's jurisdiction. (Rothstein 2017)

Them dramatizes the above-referenced moment in time as a Stepford-esque horror-themed story of the resistance that Black families experienced when confronted with the "secret society"-like behaviors of the predominantly white suburbs.

https://youtu.be/WL3Jz8fDgFI

From 1950s real estate advertisements to *The Stepford Wives* to *Them,* there is a similar signature look and feel to this bygone era. It is typified by a style of dress, a kind of home, and a kind of ritualistic social behavior. Although the representations of this culture and belief system have changed over time, visualization still remains a primary mode of capturing its look and feel.

Visual and Verbal Rhetorics Work Together in Visual Culture

The second way that the contemporary United States is a visual culture is that visual and verbal rhetoric work in conjunction with one another. A number of experts from a number of fields have said that there are significant differences between "visual" and "verbal" culture. Some have also argued that we are moving away from a primarily "verbal" (or literate) culture, defined by the circulation of information-as-words, and toward a "visual" culture in which we prize photographs and moving images as ways of digesting and retaining knowledge. The technologies available to us today make us multi-literate, rather than illiterate. For anyone who's ever had to explain how to use the computer, tv remote, or phone to a relative — or who have had to ask others for this kind of help — it's clear that the kind of 'literacy' that more recent generations have isn't less valid than the predominantly written cultures of the 20th century.

🏃🏻 ⏱️	Running late
👍🏽 🍀	Good luck
🐝 🙊	Be quiet
👉🏽 🚦 👧🏻	You go girl
👀 👉🏽 SOON➡️	See you soon
🎉 ⏰	Party time
📞 ☝🏽	Call me
🙅🏻 ☕	Not my cup of tea

This new visual AND verbal literacy has generated its own languages; one example being the pictograms we use to communicate today. Emojis, for instance, allow us to easily communicate that we are "running late," that it's "party time" or wish someone "good luck". But we can also imagine that these patterns of symbols would be mystifying for someone who was not always enculturated to know them.

Visual Culture Elevates Presentational Symbolism

Third, the contemporary united states is a visual culture because it elevates presentational symbolism.

- **Presentational symbolism** is "a direct presentation of an individual object" that "widens our

conception of rationality far beyond the traditional boundaries, yet never breaks faith with logic in the strictest sense."

An example of presentational symbolism is the difference between attending this lecture virtually and attending it in person. The experience of a virtual and an in-person lecture is very different. Specifically, the style and feel of the presentation are different. Your experience of what counts as "in-class" time is different. You either control through camera covers and backgrounds or – because you're in a lecture hall with limited movement space, you don't. Your experience of speech and persuasion is different depending on this presentational context. Your sensory experience, whether in a space with other people or by yourself, is also different.

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Visual culture elevates presentational symbolism because it tries to simulate the face-to-face experience as a virtual experience. It tries to re-create face-to-face conversations (e.g. Zoom) or one-on-one debates (e.g. Twitter) using technologies that allow us to symbolize our communication. Often, however, staging "debates" or "face-to-face conversations" does not completely simulate the interpersonal experience. Other times, merely simulating debates results in further polarization or otherwise fails to live up to the argumentative ideal of idea testing or a true engagement with opposing ideas.

Presentational symbolism also "produce a simultaneous impression of many elements," or a **gestalt**. Images

multiply and proliferate. They also become increasingly complex, representing increasing magnitudes of data. An example of this kind of presentational symbolism is the graphic representation of populations, like the above map illustrates the "big picture" of viral outbreaks in the United States as a presentation of reality that relies on a simultaneous impression of many elements.

Visual Culture is Where Rhetorical Reading Happens

Fourth, visual culture is the site of **dominant**, **negotiated**, and **oppositional readings**. These key terms describe how we interpret the visual rhetoric we encounter and create new visual rhetorics in response.

- **Dominant Reading**: the preferred, hegemonic reading. A reading in which a viewer takes the connoted meeting, and operates in the dominant code.

The dominant reading is the preferred, hegemonic reading in which a viewer accepts the connoted meaning

and operates in the dominant code. Depicted above is the famous "Flag Raising on Iwo Jima." It is also an example of an "iconic photograph." The most literal, hegemonic interpretation of the image is as a celebration of American teamwork in service of the shared goal of U.S. military victory. This is a dominant reading of this image. According to Palczewski et.al., "by recognizing and accepting these connotations, we participate in a dominant reading, in which what this means for the United States culturally is accepted and goes unchallenged."

- **Negotiated Reading**: a reading in which the viewer accepts some hegemonic meanings but recognizes exceptions. They understand the denotation but challenge the connotation.

Image by JAM Project – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The negotiated reading is a reading in which the viewer accepts some hegemonic meanings but also recognizes exceptions to this meaning. The image both comprehends the "original" literal meaning while challenging its connotation, or changing what it means for a specific audience. Depicted above is public artwork from Sydney Australia that shows soldiers raising a McDonald's sign rather than the flag. Like the

original photograph, the image denotes a kind of military "victory," but one that ultimately supports America as the land of capitalist corporations rather than as upholding civic virtue. The negotiated reading allows some of the photograph's original meanings to be accepted — the denotation of American victory — while others are challenged — replacing nationalistic camaraderie with connotations of commercialism.

- **Oppositional Reading**: a reading in which the viewer correctly decodes the denotational and connotational meanings of the text, but challenges it from an oppositional perspective.

The oppositional reading correctly decodes the denotational and connotational meanings of the text but challenges it from an oppositional perspective. In other words, the image acknowledges the denotation of "military victory" and the connotation of "civic virtue." But, at one and the same time, it also challenges these by making the audience ask: "What kind of victory?" "What kind of virtue?" and "are these ultimately redeemable?" Here is a parody of the flag raising at Iwo Jima. This political cartoon by Bill Day, published during the Iraq War during the early 2000s, shows oil executives from Texaco, Exxon, Chevron, and Halliburton raising an oil derrick — and gas prices — under a banner reading "mission accomplished."

Image by mashroms. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

"Mission Accomplished" was a phrase visually featured in a speech by George W. Bush, who had declared victory in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003 while aboard an aircraft carrier. The image is oppositional because it challenges the patriotic truthiness of Bush's speech. It suggests that our motives for victory were financial rather than virtuous and that the "victory" that was sought might actually be reflected in harder times for Americans at the gas pumps. The oppositional reading, therefore, acknowledges the denotation (or "victory") and the connotation (or "virtue") by offering a rebuttal to the dominant reading on both fronts.

Visual Culture is a Stage for Presence

Fifth, visual images possess **presence.** Presence means that the image has an immediate impact on the viewer's perception, or that it "acts on us" by bringing something before our eyes. The images on this slide are examples of the way that presence does this kind of work, the way it brings something before our eyes. Each can be seen two ways, but only by focusing on different parts of the image so that they come to represent a different object.

The image on the left is either the face of an elderly woman or the face of someone looking away from us. The middle image is the famous "duck/rabbit" which share an eye but have mouths that face in opposite directions. The image on the right is either a chalice or two faces that point at one another. All of them "bring something before us" by asking us to focus on specific elements of the image, like figure or ground, in order for us as a watching audience to capture the representation. Only one version of the image can be "present" to the viewer at a time.

> 🖵 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-4*

Another example of "presence" is the phenomenon of **anamorphosis**. Anamorphosis is a renaissance-era drawing technique that allows an image to come together only when viewed from the proper perspective. Even apparently haphazardly arranged materials, when viewed at the right angle can bring a portrait 'before the eyes,' acting upon us by making an immediate impact on our perception. When understood as the act of viewing something at the proper angle, anamorphosis is what makes an image or idea "present" to the viewer.

Visual Culture References Beliefs, Values, and Ideology

Sixth, visual images are points of common reference that illustrate and depict taken-for-granted beliefs, values, and ideologies of a culture. According to rhetorical scholars Victoria Gallagher and Ken Zagacki, visual images do the work of reflecting the culture that produced them. Some images, like the paintings of Norman Rockwell, have, in their words, "evoke the common humanity of blacks and whites by making visible the abstract forms of civic life in the lived experience of individual citizens, both black and white." According to Gallaher and Zagacki, Rockwell's images did the work of reflecting American culture in three ways:

- Rockwell's images disregarded established caricatures of Black Americans
- Rockwell's images regarded its subjects as human individuals with unique narratives and identities.
- Rockwell's images made abstract political concepts like "equality" or "fairness" knowable and concrete.

We'll talk about two images from Gallagher and Zagacki's article using the above listed criteria. The first is titled "The Problem We All Live With," which depicts Ruby Bridges, the first African-American child to desegregate the all-white William Frantz Elementary School on her way to her first class in Louisiana in 1960.

The following background about Ruby Bridges is quoted from the website of The National Women's History Museum:

> Born on September 8, 1954, Bridges was the oldest of five children for Lucille and Abon Bridges, farmers in Tylertown, Mississippi. When Ruby was two years old, her parents moved their family to New Orleans, Louisiana in search of better work opportunities. Ruby's birth year coincided with the US Supreme Court's landmark ruling in Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka Kansas, which ended racial segregation in public schools.

> Nonetheless, southern states continued to resist integration, and in 1959, Ruby attended a segregated New Orleans kindergarten. A year later, however, a federal court ordered Louisiana to desegregate. The school district created entrance exams for African American students to see whether they could compete academically at the all-white school. Ruby and five other students passed the exam. Her parents were torn about whether to let her attend the all-white William Frantz Elementary School, a few blocks from their home. Her father resisted, fearing for his daughter's safety; her mother, however, wanted Ruby to have the educational opportunities that her parents had been denied. Meanwhile, the school district dragged its feet, delaying her admittance until November 14. Two of the other students decided not to leave their school at all; the other three were sent to the all-white McDonough Elementary School.

> Ruby and her mother were escorted by four federal marshals to the school every day that year. She walked past crowds screaming vicious slurs at her. Undeterred, she later said she only became frightened when she saw a woman holding a black baby doll in a coffin. She spent her first day in the principal's office due to the chaos created as angry white parents pulled their children from school. Ardent segregationists withdrew their children permanently. Barbara Henry, a white Boston native, was the only teacher willing to accept Ruby, and all year, she

was a class of one. Ruby ate lunch alone and sometimes played with her teacher at recess, but she never missed a day of school that year.

"The Problem We All Live With" by Norman Rockwell

1. First, Rockwell's style of painting departed from typical ways that Black Americans were represented in editorial cartoons. Whereas a common way of representing diversity was in cartoons and using racist stereotypes, Rockwell painted Bridges and his other subjects as realistic characters in a three-dimensional space. His artwork sought to faithfully render events as they actually transpired in public settings without lampooning or satirizing the subject material. In the case of "The Problem We All Live With," Rockwell places Bridges on a sidewalk, presumably on her way to school. In the background, the viewer can see the residue of a tomato.

2. Second, Rockwell recognized the particularity of his painted subjects: they tell a unique story and stand out from the other characters in the painting. Ruby Bridges is personalized in this image because she is the only figure who is fully within the frame of the picture. Her school materials make a striking contrast with the tomato, a reminder of the pro-segregationist protests that accompanied her attendance at William Frantz Elementary.

3. Finally, Rockwell's image made abstract political concepts like segregation and equality knowable. Ruby is depicted as "on her way" to a desegregated education, while in reality she was still segregated within the school. Although Ruby represented the political battle over the desegregated classroom, Ruby was not "free" in her learning environment, contained by American racism, law enforcement escorts, and a community that was reluctant to accept her (191).

"New Kids in the Neighborhood" by Norman Rockwell. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. Image by Peter E.

The second image is called "New Kids in the Neighborhood," which depicts a Black family moving into a white suburb.

1. As with the previous image, in "New Kids in the Neighborhood," Rockwell again disregarded racist caricatures of Black people by white artists. As noted earlier in this chapter, his illustrations also depicted the standoffish relationships between Black and white residents at a time when the suburbs were still popularly depicted as populated by an exclusively white middle class.

2. Rockwell recognized characters in their particularity, this time through a juxtaposition of formal elements in the painting. The "new kids" are personalized based on their contrasting posture (standing straight and leaning forward/back). The color scheme on the left and right sides of the painting is also distinct. The "new neighbors" are dressed in pastels; they are holding a white cat and a baseball glove. The children to the white are drawn in a darker color scheme, one holding a black dog by a leash and another dressed as a baseball player. Gallagher and Zagacki state that the characters strike a "visual balance" and "show the things blacks and whites shared in common, despite racial and other differences" (186).

3. Finally, "New Kids in the Neighborhood" made abstract political concepts knowable. Rockwell visually

portrayed a gap between the two groups of children. The disproportion in the numbers of children on each side gives a form to abstract concepts such as equality and material realities such as housing segregation.

Visual Culture is Immersive

Finally, the united states is a visual culture because visual forms of communication surround us, appearing in multiple outlets all at once. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz, culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols." In this case, these symbols are visual and work with the verbal to construct a familiar world of meanings that gives us a sense of security. The popular 2012 film *The Avengers*, for instance, depicts a transformed and futuristic military as desirable, transforming the popular Marvel superhero franchise into a positive depiction of the military as morally righteous and technologically sublime.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-5

Our visual culture is modeled after written culture, but it creates new, relational forms of communication and gives us new ways of relating to one another. The ultimate purpose of understanding the specific pattern of meanings and symbols that we use in our time, and how these unique forms of meaning-making also are generative of who we call our family, our friends, and our communities.

Part 2: Genres of Visual Rhetoric

Although the rhetoric of visual culture changes dramatically over time, rhetoricans have pointed to several different kinds of visual rhetoric that shape Americans' popular and political beliefs. These include **iconic photographs**, **body rhetoric**, **monumental rhetoric**, and **image events**.

Iconic Photographs

Iconic Photographs are widely-circuling images that retain political significance in a visual culture. They are made famous because they commemorate a specific moment in time and symbolize the values of the public that it represents. Iconic photographs have four key features:

- They must be recognized by everyone.
- They must be understood as representations of historically significant events.
- They must be powerful objects of emotional identification and response.
- They must be regularly reproduced or copied across a range of media.

First, iconic photographs must be recognized by everyone in a public culture. Each of the photographs marks a specific moment in American public memory. The Flag Raising on Iwo Jima and the Times Square kiss are widely recognized as associated with American public culture at the end of WWII because each uses a widely recognized pose to depict American military victory alongside the American flag or iconic American locations like Times Square. The Kent State photograph, depicting student resistance against military force in Vietnam that resulted in military violence against students, similarly captures a widely recognizable moment that lasts well beyond the moment when the photograph was taken.

Alfred Eisenstaedt's "V-J Day in Times Square" (1945)

Second, iconic photographs must be understood as representations of historically significant events. As artifacts of American public culture, both "Flag-raising at Iwo Jima" and "V-J Day in Times Square" are representations of wartime victory or post-war celebration that clearly mark the end of WWII. The Kent State photograph is widely recognized as a representation of American culture and student resistance during the Vietnam War.

Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" (1936)

Third, they must depict objects of strong emotional identification and response. The "ideas" depicted in each of the photographs are highly charged, emotionally. Each represents a kind of emotional release, the enthusiasm that comes with collective victory and success, the joy of being reunited with a loved one, the grief, and anger that accompanies the taking of innocent life. In each case, the emotions are high key and prominent to the viewer.

V-J Day in Times Square painting by Kobra. Image by B. de los Arcos. CC BY-NC 2.0

Finally, they must be regularly reproduced or copied across a range of media. Part of what contributes to the recognizability of the photographs is the fact that they have been so widely circulated, reproduced, and parodied.

Body Rhetoric and Enactment

According to the textbook, body rhetoric tries to capture the impact the human body has on the messages that it communicates. "Who says a message and how a body is made present communicate as much as what is said." **Body rhetoric** is rhetoric that foregrounds the body as part of the symbolic act. **Enactment** occurs when the person engaging in symbolic action functions as proof of the argument they advance.

Photo by Phiend. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

The image that is shown here was taken on the day of Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court in 2018. It should be remembered that Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court after credible testimony from a number of women, including Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford, emerged that Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted them. During the protests that occurred during his confirmation, **body rhetoric, or rhetoric that foregrounds the body as part of the symbolic act,** consisted in the way that the crowd of protestors gave public anger a communicable form. Following the vote that confirmed him and just before his swearing-in, a contingent of protesters descended on the Supreme Court. Bodies poured onto the stairs with chants such as "Whose Court? Our Court" and "Arrest Sexual Predators, Not Protesters."

The second way that body rhetoric occurred during this event was as enactment, as protesters used their own bodies as examples of what they were protesting. Occupying the prohibited stairways and chanting through the swearing-in, this protest was capped by the iconic image of a white woman who climbed the statue called "Contemplation of Justice: sat in her lap, and held up a fist and a small handwritten sign reading "#MeToo." This image is an example of **enactment,** which occurs when the person engaging in symbolic action functions as proof of the argument they advance. The #Metoo slogan, the protestor with the raised fist, and Lady Justice are embodiments of who still remains silenced by protections accorded to privileged white men.
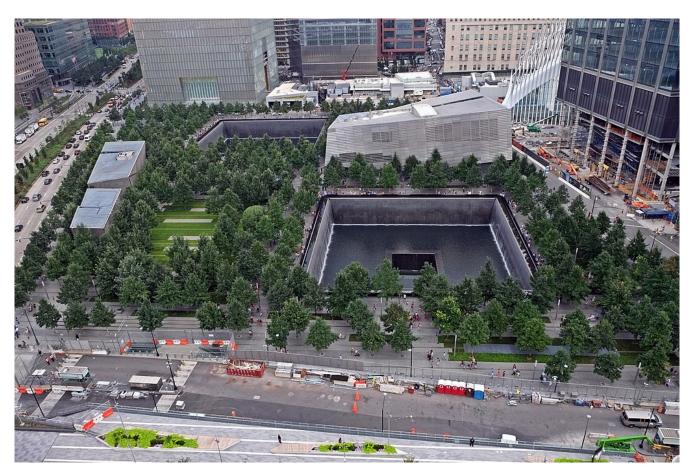
Monumental Rhetoric

The textbook brings monuments, memorials, and museums together as a unique genre of visual rhetoric. This is because "controversy often arises over monuments and memorials," which mark famous locations or commemorate the dead — and because they "direct people's views of themselves." We assure ourselves of a national or family identity when we visit sites with special significance. Visual Rhetoric is concerned with the way that certain sites are places where shared meaning is made, and how this shared meaning is transmitted in the representation of a place, as well as the experience of 'being there.' **Monumental Rhetoric guides people in their thinking about facts from the past, how to act in the present, and what possible futures to seek.** They sustain what a public remembers about its own historical events, and make arguments about how to think about the identities of particular groups of people.

As an example, the 9/11 memorial in New York City demonstrates how this kind of memory — which is about the past, present, and future — is built into visual representations and the experience of being there. According to your textbook, "The Freedom Tower at Ground Zero, now called One World Trade Center, did

not open until 2015. Disagreement over the form of monumental structures at the site delayed construction until 2006. The final monument does a lot of representational work by commemorating the dead and creating a symbolic reminder of September 11th. Here is a description of the structure from rhetorical critics Nicholas S. Paliewicz and Marouf Hasian Jr.:

"The footprint of the memorial is the hollowed-out remains of the former Twin Towers. Here, in their vacancies, they are a key part of 'reflective absences,' the massive architectural counters that channel the symbolic water. Each footprint is nearly an acre in size and, from their peripheries, cascades of water pummel downward to the basin 30 feet below. The water then moves its way towards the epicenter of each footprint where it drops another 30 feet only to be pumped and recycled all over again. The names of those who perished on 9/11 are etched on bronze parapets that surround the reflecting pools. While the North Pool contains the names of victims from the North Tower, the 1993 bombing, and Flight 11, the South Pool has the names of those from the South Tower, the First Responders, Flight 93, Flight 77, the Pentagon, and Flight 173. Like graveyard tombstones, the granite names of those who lost their lives may offer a sense of connectedness between the visitor and the dead. At the same time, the water produces an aesthetic of peace and tranquility that might relieve any lingering trauma from 9/11. For many commentators and visitors, the water is said to be a healing feature of the Memorial, a material reality that influences how one contextualizes 9/11."

Rhetorical scholar Joshua Gunn calls the commemoration of 9/11 "a cultural performance of witnessing, a longing to return to, and escape from, the violent scene." The endlessly flowing pools also remind viewers that they are not just healing waters but also open wounds. They capture loss while also reminding attendees of the towers that used to stand in the footprint of the memorial. This loss is created because the falls are built downward, a physical reflection of the towers that once stretched upward. Like a tower where a viewer from up-close would have to strain to see the top, the pools are built so as to create the illusion of an endless waterfall, where you would similarly strain to see the bottom.

"GROUND ZERO NEW YORK" by ERIC SALARD, CC BY-SA 2.0

As an example of monumental rhetoric, the memorial offers us a version of the past, present, and future which are captured in the intentional design of the monument as well as the kind of experiences that can be had by people who pass through it. As a reminder of the past, it tells us about the tragedy of the towers' destruction, as well as who was lost in the event. As a monument suited to present-day concerns, it allows visitors to

remember, express grief, and see their own reflections in the lists of names. As a vision of the possible future, it seeks to communicate a sense of loss as a reminder and warning for what might come next.

Image Events

Image Events are staged acts designed for media dissemination. Often protests are made for "pictures." Recently, controversy erupted over the way that the National Archives blurred and censored protest signs from the Women's March in Washington. Protests are also carefully controlled events, often involving the securing of permits and the supervision of the police. Protests are therefore either choreographed or not; the way they are captured as organized or disorganized, as having a story or not, dictates how they are reported and remembered.

> 📠 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-6*

Your textbook tells the story of the "original" image event, which was staged by Greenpeace on July 27, 1975. Developed by Greenpeace activists who wanted to stage protests in a publicly visible way that could be widely circulated, the "Mind Bomb" was a way to publicize the social movement to save the whales. The problem with image events is that their staging can be genuine or disingenuous. If we were to compare the tactics of Greenpeace to say, the television show "Whale Wars," which was canceled after facing significant legal troubles, we can see that strategically staged protests can serve the interests of social movements and also line the pockets of people who want to exploit this imagery for their own benefit.

> 📠 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-9*

Extinction Rebellion "Sinking House" Installation in the River Thames (2019)
As an example of how image events can create authenticity and mislead, take a look at these two videos. The video on the right, which documents the "Occupy Wall Street" protests, is an example of "perceived authenticity," a movement that is real or "grass-roots" rather than fake or "astro-turf."

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-7*

The above video on the left shows an advertisement by Kendall Jenner that exploits the popular imagery of social protest to sell a product: Pepsi. One question that we should have about image events is what it is that makes them perceptibly authentic or inauthentic, or whether it's possible to have an image event that is able to grip the public's attention without creating suspicions that the event is being falsified. If it were possible to communicate a social movement-based message in a way that was structured as an image event, could that event be both "constructed" and "authentic" at the same time?

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=189#oembed-8*

Reviewing the Genres of Visual Rhetoric

- An **iconic photograph** can take many forms, but it would not be something with personal meaning like a family photograph, a random picture of a politician in front of a well-known building, or a well-taken picture of a monument at sunset. It must be published and circulated; it must be well recognized as commemorating a historical moment or event. However, the meaning of an iconic photograph isn't an image where everyone agrees on what it means. Instead, it's possible that people forget what it means, and for people to remake its commonly accepted meaning.
- **Monuments** commemorate and create history. The architecture and movement through a monument are also a part of its rhetoric. Visitors are guided to perceive objects from a new perspective because of the symbolic and embodied design of memorials.
- **Bodies** can be the proof of an argument, and can be an argument. Bodies can also make the argument that their own speech has been restricted. When a person's body is an example of the argument they are making, it is enactment.
- Finally, **image events** take the form of representations of an instance of social protest. Multiple photographs or video summarizes a movement, such as news footage of the National Womens' March, would be examples of an example of image events.

Additional Resources

Background on Visual Rhetoric

- Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs, Susan Schultz Huxman, and Thomas A. Burkholder. "Understanding Visual Rhetoric." *The rhetorical act: Thinking, speaking and writing critically.* Cengage Learning, 2014: 261-271.
- Finnegan, Cara A. "Studying Visual Modes of Public Address: Lewis Hine's Progressive-Era Child Labor Rhetoric." *The handbook of rhetoric and public address* (2010): 250-270.
- Finnegan, Cara A. "Doing rhetorical history of the visual: The photograph and the archive." *Defining visual rhetorics* (2004): 195-214.
- Gronbeck, Bruce. Visual Rhetoric Bibliography
- Lucaites, John Louis, and Robert Hariman. "Visual rhetoric, photojournalism, and democratic public culture." *Rhetoric Review* 20.1/2 (2001): 37-42.
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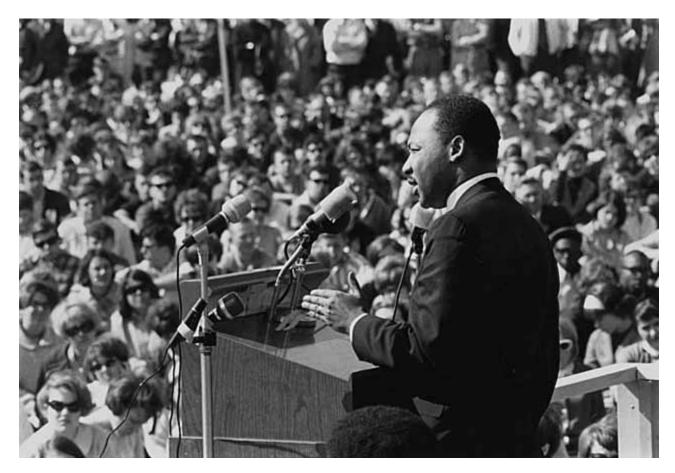### Examples of Visual Rhetorical Analysis

- Barney, Timothy. "Power lines: The rhetoric of maps as social change in the post–Cold War landscape." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95.4 (2009): 412-434.
- Bruce, Caitlin Frances. ""How Philly Moves": from urban branding to kinesthetic sympathy through an aesthetic of blur." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 36.2-3 (2016): 115-136.
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- Greenwalt, Dustin A., and Atilla Hallsby. "Graphed into the Conversation: Conspiracy, Controversy, and Climategate's Visual Style." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 51.4 (2021): 293-308.
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- Petchesky, Rosalind Pollack. "Fetal images: The power of visual culture in the politics of reproduction." *Feminist studies* 13.2 (1987): 263-292.
- Walsh, Lynda. "The visual rhetoric of climate change." *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 6.4 (2015): 361-368.
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Image Events

- Delicath, John W., and Kevin Michael DeLuca. "Image events, the public sphere, and argumentative practice: The case of radical environmental groups." *Argumentation* 17.3 (2003): 315-333.
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CHAPTER 10: THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking at the University of Minnesota, 1967. Minnesota Historical Society. CC BY-SA 2.0

This chapter is about the **rhetorical situation**. The rhetorical situation is a framework for rhetorical analysis designed for individual speeches and assessing their reception by an audience. This chapter offers a detailed explanation of the rhetorical situation and defines its core components: the **exigence**, the **audience**, and **constraints**. The second section of the chapter provides detailed examples of the rhetorical situation. The third section explains a related model of "situation" called the "**rhetorical ecology**." This chapter contains YouTube video content not presented in the recorded lectures.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: [Defining the Rhetorical Situation](#) (Video, ~20m)
- Part 2: [Analysis of a Rhetorical Situation](#) (Video, ~20m)
- Part 3: [Rhetorical Ecologies](#) (Video, ~12m)

Read this Next

- Palczewski, Catherine Helen, et al. "Chapter 8 Rhetorical Situations." *Rhetoric in Civic Life*, Strata Pub., State College, PA, 2012, pp. 225–263.

Written Assignments

- [Assignment Description for Short Paper 3: Rhetorical Analysis](#)

Part 1: Defining the Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation is a fundamental framework for understanding rhetoric as a form of *persuasion*, that is, as a speech or text that seeks to influence an audience's actions. It describes rhetoric as a response to a problem or an answer to a question. Given an imperfect state of affairs, rhetoric responds or intervenes to create some change by addressing an audience. The rhetorical situation is also part of the tradition of **public**

address scholarship. Public address may consist in the composition of eloquent speeches that are to be delivered in public settings, a studied reflection upon the geographical locations where public events have occurred in the past, or the researching of presidential correspondence, letters, or newsprint publications about former occupants of the executive branch. Public address is most aptly described as the criticism of public speech that approximates more closely a genuinely historical point of view regarding the ideas of our shared social history.
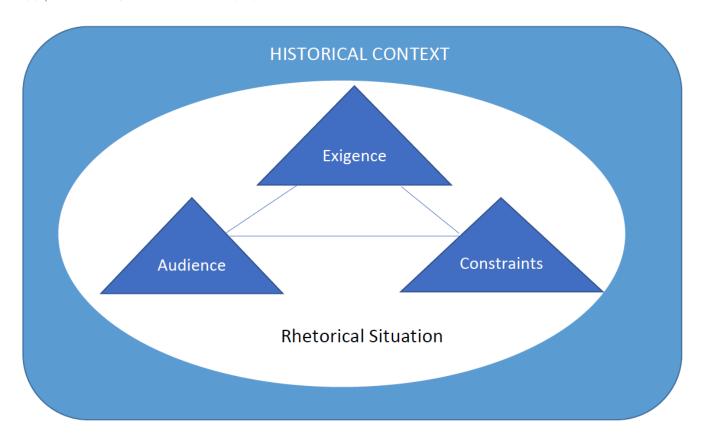
The rhetorical situation is also part of a tradition that understands rhetoric as *context-dependent.* Often, rhetorical scholars attribute this idea to Aristotle, who defines rhetoric as "the available means of persuasion *in any given situation.*" In other words, understanding the force of a persuasive speech act relies upon a deep knowledge of the setting in which it was spoken. Aristotle also describes rhetoric's situations in terms of three discrete *genres*: **Forensic rhetoric** is about the past and whether it did or did not happen; the traditional "situation" for forensic rhetoric was the courtroom proceeding. **Epideictic,** about matters of praise or blame, was speech situated in public spaces and delivered to a mass audience. **Deliberative** or policy-making speeches would occur in the situation of legislation and lawmaking, in service of developing a future course of action.

Forensic	Epideictic	Deliberative
The past	The present	The future
Facts: whether a thing did or did not happen.	Values: whether to issue praise or blame.	Policy: whether we should (not) take action.
Judiciary or Courts	Punditry or Eulogy	Legislation and Law

These three original genres of speech give the speech that is delivered in these spaces a specific function. They respond to a set of pre-defined circumstances concerning matters of *fact*, *good and bad judgment*, and *policy*. The rhetorical situation is an extension of this understanding. It provides us with a framework that says that speech responds to a set of pre-existing circumstances and is tailored for an audience.

> According to Lloyd Bitzer, **the rhetorical situation** is that it is a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced in the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.

- First, the rhetorical situation is a *complex of persons, events, objects, and relations*. The complex of *persons* includes speakers and audiences. *Events* include important and historic instances of speech and speech-making. *Objects* include the symbols gathered by speeches, what those speeches reference, and the speech's effects. The complex *relations* of the situation describes the audiences it brings forth and the modes of identification it cultivates.
- Second, the rhetorical situation *presents an actual or potential exigence*. An exigence is "an urgency marked by imperfection." It describes a state of discontent or emergency in which speech is an adequate response and can bring about a resolution. Exigences ultimately describe the problem that the speech must respond to.
- Third, the rhetorical situation can *completely or partially remove the exigence*. This means that an adequate speech makes the exigence is reversible by producing effects and audiences that are capable of addressing or effecting the change as the emergency requires.
- Fourth, the rhetorical situation *introduces discourse into the situation*. This means that the use or application of rhetoric can undo the emergency. A speech that will heal the situation will bring things to a resolution.
- Fifth, the *speech* presented in a rhetorical situation *may constrain human decisions or actions*. This means that a situation is rhetorical when speech resolves an emergency by steering people to act in a way that, had the speech not happened, they otherwise would not.
- Finally, the *speech* presented in a rhetorical situation *may bring about a significant modification of the exigence*. Significant modification means that the speech does *something* to address the problem. Ultimately, this effect of speech upon a greater exigence is what makes the situation a rhetorical one.

Key Aspects of Rhetorical Situations

- The **historical context** is the larger background in which a message is situated. The **rhetorical situation** is a subset of that field, a smaller, more defined relative of a greater historical context.
- The **rhetorical situation** always places three specific elements into a relationship with each other. These are the rhetorical *exigence*, the *audience*, and the *constraints*.
- A **rhetorical exigence** is an urgency marked by imperfection. It is the thing to which a speech – the rhetorical response – responds.
- A **rhetorical audience** is those people who have the capacity to act on the speaker's message.
- A **rhetorical constraint** describes those things that limit the audience to interpret the message and steer them to act in one direction or another.

A Rhetorical Situation is not a "Context" …

A further important feature of the rhetorical situation is that it is not the same as context. This is, first of all, because every message occurs in a context, and not all contexts are rhetorical. Practically, this means that context is general, and the rhetorical situation is specific. A historical context is one in which any message can occur.

... because not all contexts are rhetorical.

A rhetorical situation is a situation that allows for a response, a speech that is capable of changing people's minds and motivating their actions. The second reason the rhetorical situation is not the same as context is that only a rhetorical situation can invite a rhetorical response.

... because only a rhetorical situation can invite a rhetorical response.

Context is *the history of an utterance, a series of motivations, occurrences, and acts that set a precedent for a public and cultural status quo*. As a running example of the difference between *context* and *situation,* let's consider the 2020 presidential impeachment hearings.

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The greater **context** for these presidential impeachment hearings might include the 1987 Iran-Contra scandal and the 1998 impeachment hearing of Bill Clinton. Both are distant historical events in which speeches and arguments were made concerning Congress's authority over the Executive branch. Consistently, attorneys for the President have claimed that Congress did not have the authority to investigate the President whereas Congress has claimed that authority.

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The **rhetorical situation** for Presidential impeachment hearings in 2020 would instead be the circumstances and consequences surrounding a 2019 phone call between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Donald Trump. The speakers and speeches generated by the impeachment trials themselves would be the "rhetoric" that responded to this situation. It would be comprised of Congressional testimony, official investigative reports, political biographies, and commentary by political pundits.

Rhetorical Response/Rhetorical Audience

Not every response to a rhetorical situation is rhetorical. Non-rhetorical responses are those that do not affect the exigency. Rhetorical responses are those that do. An emergency such as war might provoke messages that people should be afraid or display courage. Those messages can't be separated from the emergency that

occasioned it. In that sense, they are "responses" to the rhetorical situation. But not every "response" has its intended effects, and not every "response" can be directly tied back to the exigence at hand.

Below is an example of the testimony offered during the 2019 impeachment hearings instigated by the Zelensky-Trump phone conversation. The speaker is Fiona Hill, a U.S. diplomatic liaison to the Ukraine who was removed from her post just days before the phone call occurred.

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A *response* is *rhetorical* when it is addressed to a *rhetorical audience*, that is, those auditors or listeners who have the capacity to act. Not all audiences can be rhetorical audiences. In practice, this means more people will hear the rhetorical response than can address it—only people who can act count as the rhetorical audience.

> For example, consider a political speech urging young people to vote delivered by a candidate that is delivered to an audience that has a mix of high school students. However, this speech may be heard by the younger members of the crowd or people whose naturalization status prevents them from voting. If the sought-after effect of the speech is for people to vote for the candidate, then Bitzer's theory of the rhetorical situation is limited because it only includes those with the capability to vote.

Exigence, Audience, and Constraints

The **rhetorical exigence** is defined as imperfection marked by urgency. It is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing other than it should be. There are also *non-rhetorical exigences*, or "emergencies," for which speech *isn't* a good or effective response. Bitzer describes a natural disaster as a "non-rhetorical exigence" – a well-delivered speech, traditionally conceived, might not be the best immediate response. Instead of speech alone, an adequate rhetorical response would have to include emergency alerts, funding, and climate change mitigation efforts. What makes for a rhetorical exigence is when speech provides the remedy to the imperfection by urgency.

> In the case referenced earlier, the recorded conversation between Zelensky and Trump documented a request to investigate Joe Biden in exchange for an already-promised military defense system. This conversation is the **rhetorical exigence**: it generated a public emergency for which speech was deemed to be a fitting response.

The **rhetorical audience** is defined as only those capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change. They must be capable of making some change that would adjust the exigence due to hearing the speech.

There were at least two rhetorical audiences for the 2020 impeachment proceedings. One rhetorical audience of the Senate hearings consisted of the US Senate and Chief Justice John Roberts. They were the ones who would be ultimately voting on the Impeachment. In the style of forensic rhetoric, the Senators and possibly Roberts in the event of a tie were charged with discovering whether or not the President had committed an impeachable offense. Because they were the ones with the capacity to act, they composed the rhetorical audience.

The American voting public was a second rhetorical audience insofar as the messages conveyed in the Senate were meant to convince voters to turn out for the November 2020 election. Hearing the appeals on the Senate floor also persuaded those who could vote to cast them.

Finally, **rhetorical constraints** are comprised of persons, events, objects, and relations. These are part of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision-making and action.

In the Senate, constraints could include procedural limitations such as who gets to make the rules about how and when testimony is offered. It could be relations, in the sense partisan groups would seek to shut the trials down. It could be that another emergency interrupts the proceedings, or prevents that event from being remembered.

Responses to Rhetorical Situations

There are different kinds of responses to rhetorical situations.

- The first response is **conformity**, in which the audience accepts what the speech is asking of them, and they perform the action that is requested.
- The second is **desecration** which violates what would have been an appropriate response. Given that there is a normal range of responses that would be accepted from a situation, the response of desecration would violate those expectations and challenge them. If someone were giving a eulogy, for instance, laughter would be a prohibited response and example of desecration.

The famous Apple "1984" advertisement linked below offers a dramatized example of both "conformity" and "desecration," in the sense that the gathered viewers are in *conformity* with the televised speaker's message whereas the running character who throws the sledgehammer violates conformist expectations and *desecrating* both the speaker and their message.

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- The third response is **non-participation**, which rejects the legitimacy of the rhetorical situation by

refusing to be a part of it. In other words, it says that the emergency is not that big of an emergency, or that we don't have to be so concerned about the emergency that is being posed. That non-participation is a rhetorical response because it simultaneously responds to the exigency by refusing to recognize it.

- Finally, **contextual reconstruction** is when a rhetor redefines the situation. In other words, given the rhetorical effort to redefine or reframe the exigency, it provides an alternative look at the current circumstances.

Below is an episode of Crossfire, a debate-style television show from the early 2000s which embraces a both-sides format. This episode features John Stewart, recently the new host of the *Daily Show*. Stewart first engages in non-participation by rejecting the premise of the show and refusing to "debate." He then engages in a *contextual reconstruction* that reframes Crossfire as contributing to a destructive both-sides mentality in politics. Stewart's explanation is a contextual reconstruction because reframed the event, putting it in a new light. His appearance also coincided with the cancellation of the show shortly thereafter.

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Part 2: Analysis of a Rhetorical Situation

This section of the chapter provides detailed examples of the major terms of the rhetorical situation, including *rhetorical exigence, context, audience, and constraints.* It ends with an example of a *rhetorical situation,* with a brief discussion of each of its parts.

Rhetorical Exigence: Michael Brown and Barack Obama

The exigence is the defect of the status quo. It is a problem we live with that has become acute; it is an emergency that is other than it should be. Rhetorical exigences can be modified through discourse. "In any rhetorical situation, there will be at least one controlling exigence which functions as an organizing principle." This "organizing exigence" defines the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected.

On August 9, 2014, a police officer shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, spurring nationwide mass protests against police brutality. The following year, in April 2015, protests erupted in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray, who was brutally assaulted as he was arrested, fell into a coma, and died. These events also illustrated the larger problem that police departments had started to acquire military equipment as a way to police crowds, and technologies that the military had previously used during wartime deployments

oversees suddenly became technologies used to police American citizens. Worse yet, police who were using these weapons had not been trained to use them appropriately. The racial bias of police departments across the country was becoming apparent given the accumulation of events related to police brutality.

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This short speech by Barack Obama on October 31, 2015 sought to address the exigence of mass incarceration and over-policing by healing the divide between the different groups he addresses. We should think hard about whether this speech is accomplishing that goal given its emphasis on helping the economy and people recently released from prison. However, what is clear is that it is both a response to a problem that exists prominently at the moment that Obama is speaking and a way of curating the behavior of the audiences that are meant to hear this speech.

If the rhetorical situation "specifies the audience to be addressed," then in the above clip, we can quite clearly hear Obama discussing "drug rehabilitation" and the pipeline from schools to prisons. We also heard Obama discussing police officers as people who "protect Americans." To whom is this addressed? Both audiences: it is meant to affirm both the structural causes of mass incarceration for the public made angry by prominent instances of police brutality and defend violent police officers by describing them as civil servants. However, this speech neither addresses police brutality directly nor holds police officers accountable for excessive use of force. Specified audiences of the rhetorical situation includes over-policed and structurally oppressed Americans and police officers, resulting in a "middle voice" that is stretched between these audiences.

Context: *13th* by Ava DuVernay

Obama's speech, shown above, occurs within a larger context of racial policing in the United States, which disproportionately targets minoritized communities. Every message occurs within a context: a larger, more encompassing umbrella term for the setting in which a speech or utterance happens. Context is the history of the speech or utterance, a series of motivations, occurrences, and acts that set a precedent for the current status quo – which means how things are in our present moment, right now. Consider the video below as an illustration of the larger context for Obama's 10/31/2015 speech. The documentary "13th" by Ava DuVernay explains the historical transition from slavery to the thirteenth amendment to a contemporary system of mass incarceration.

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Rhetorical Audience: George H.W. Bush v. Michael Dukakis

Next, let's consider the rhetorical audience, which describes only those capable of being influenced by a speech (or rhetorical discourse) and of being mediators of change.

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Above is another rhetorical message that is situated within the larger context of mass incarceration. However, it has a different situation: the 1988 Dukakis/Bush presidential election. The video is a campaign advertisement from the first George Bush campaign which attacks Dukakis. The exigence is Dukakis's early lead on George Bush, which created an opening for a rhetorical response. This response is important for how it targeted specific voters by preying on the stereotype of violent minorities and the idea that people who had been imprisoned would always be "prisoners" or "criminals," regardless of rehabilitation or if their incarceration was unjust. Let's take a look at the video.

The rhetorical audience here isn't just who can be influenced by the message. Viewers, for instance, might be angered by the message that's being sent by this video. It is specifically those who would act on that message by voting against the Dukakis campaign. Viewers who might react against this message are also a rhetorical audience. They may reject the message and doing the opposite of what it asks or offer an alternative explanation of mass incarceration that does not rely on racist caricatures.

Rhetorical Constraints: Parody and Satire

Let's consider the last element of the rhetorical situation: constraints. Constraints are comprised of persons, events, objects, and relations that are part of the situation because they can constrain decision-making and action that could modify the exigence. This example offers another campaign ad. IT is not as clearly related to the larger context of mass incarceration. This video illustrates "constraints" by showing how political campaign ads are always limited in what they can say or the messages they communicate.

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The Phil Gulbright/Gil Fulbright/Phillip Mymoufwiffarts political advertisement illustrates the limitations on the speaker because he draws attention to how his own beholdenness to multiple audiences: the voting public and his private donors – narrowly shape his own rhetorical response.

Rhetorical Situation: The Challenger Address

The final example of the rhetorical situation is Ronald Reagan's Challenger Address Speech.

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The following explanation of this rhetorical situation comes from Catherine Palczewski et al.:

> Reagan clearly identified the **exigence**: "the tragedy of the shuttle *Challenger*… is truly a national loss" that made it a day "for mourning and remembering," but the march of progress and the call for exploration gave meaning to that loss of life.

> The **context** for this meaning was a history of exploration associated with past empires. According to Reagan, the members of the space shuttle crew had "a hunger to explore the universe" and were part of a long line of explorers. The examples of the 1967 *Apollo I* fire and the 1596 death of Francis Drake offered similar historical events that helped make the loss of life during exploration seem normal and expected. As Reagan explained to schoolchildren: "Its all part of the process of exploration and discovery."

> The **audiences** in the situation were composed of people who shared the need for reassurance and the sentiment that exploration defines the people of the United States: the families of the astronauts, schoolchildren, NASA workers, and the viewing public who had tuned in to the event. Reagan provided an explanation not of the accident but of exploration. He thus offered a response that quickly passed through stages of mourning while seeking to reinforce the public faith in expanded American space exploration. Reagan's hybrid response sought to justify funding for the space program (a *deliberative* goal) while also eulogizing the lives of the astronauts who had died in the explosion (an *epideictic* goal).

The **constraints** in the situation concerned the genre of eulogy, which Reagan mirrored in structuring his speech. He also assumed a paternalistic role in the speech, speaking not only as President but as an elder relative to schoolchildren who had been watching the speech from across the country.

As a total **rhetorical situation**, the **rhetor,** Reagan, responded to an exigence by speaking to particular **audiences**, such as school children and the viewing public, in a way that accounted for **constraints** such as the appropriate way to respond to a tragic loss of life. Reagan did not just respond to this situation, but sought to actively redefine what it meant.
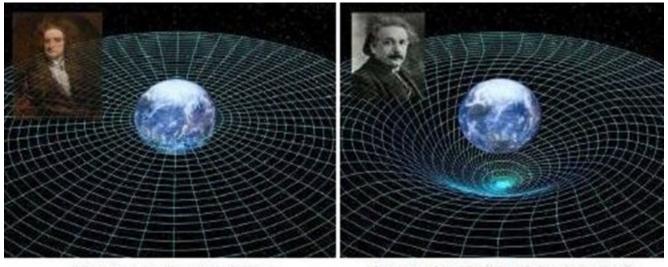
Part 3: Rhetorical Ecologies

Although Lloyd Bitzer develops the concept of "the rhetorical situation" there are several other participants in this conversation. I'd like to draw our attention to Lloyd Bitzer, Richard Vatz, and Jenny Edbauer.

1. Bitzer is the originator of the rhetorical situation. In his view, there is *first* a situation, *then* there is a rhetorical response, and *finally,* rhetoric that people can act upon. The emergency arises and it creates conditions for a speaker to invent a speech that moves people to some action.

2. Vatz argues that rhetoric arises not because of a situation, but because of the speaker. From this point of view, there is no emergency unless a rhetor perceives there to be an emergency. It is the speaker's job to create a shared reality for the audience through their speech. However, if the public's perception of an emergency depends on the speaker, a real, material reality may be at odds with other "emergencies" that a speaker brings to the public's attention as distractions. The realities of pandemics and climate change, for instance, may be something that a speaker cannot distract from with another "imagined" exigence. Some emergencies simply cannot be ignored or deflected by a speaker because they form such a commonly felt urgency.

3. Edbauer argues that rhetoric never occurs in one situation but always unfolds across many situations. Whereas Bitzer and Vatz focus on individual speeches delivered in isolated situations, Edbauer is more interested in the way that rhetoric moves from one situation to another, much like a viral tweet or video. Rhetoric that occurs in one situation may then give rise to similar rhetoric that arises in a separate situation. This then may create yet another rhetorical response, unrelated to the first, and so on. The speaker isn't the most important person in the Edbauer model. Instead, the rhetoric moves from one rhetorical moment to the next to produce a message across a variety of situations.

Rhetorical ecologies are variations on the traditional framework of the rhetorical situation. A rhetorical situation is typically conceived as a speaker's unique creation or as a response to an emergency. Edbauer's version of a rhetorical situation suggests that it isn't fixed; it does not happen once or in isolation. Instead, Edbauer argues that exigences are always a series of events. These situations create a network of lived experiences and structures of feeling. Edbauer also contextualizes rhetoric in terms of time, history, and

experience. Rhetoric from this point of view isn't linear. It doesn't start with a speaker who devises a speech that is received by an audience. Rhetoric moves from one moment to another, from one situation to another. It changes depending on the historical moment and the particular experiences that a given instance of rhetoric foregrounds.

Newton's fixed space vs. Einstein's flexible spacetime, from the film "Testing Einstein's Universe" by Norbert Bartel.

- **The Rhetorical Situation:** Traditionally conceived, situations are *fixed spaces.* By comparison, rhetorical ecologies are *dynamic spaces*. The word situation comes from the Latin *Situs*, which signifies a bordered and fixed location. An example of *Situs* is the (incorrect) idea of the Earth as the presumptive center of the Universe, having a stable position that does not affect the space around it. A *Situs* for rhetoric would mean that everything revolves around the speech's ability to respond to an emergency.
- **The Rhetorical Ecology:** Instead of a *Situs* for rhetoric, the ecology model describes rhetoric's force, intensity, and circulatory range as a *distribution*. This would be like the shift from the Newtonian Model to the Einsteinian Model, where space is molded or shaped around the speech or object. In other words, there is no clear "center" for rhetoric; rhetoric instead has many centers with distinct mass and gravity. Rather than just one speech or rhetorical discourse, an ecology-based approach would think about multiple speeches or discourses and how they affect and interact with one another.

Writing as Rhetorical Situation and Rhetorical Ecology

Let's consider "writing an assignment" in terms of the situation and ecology models of rhetoric. As a ***Situs***, writing would be a very linear process. It would follow a first, second, third progression: receive the

assignment (the exigence), outline and draft a (rhetorical) response, and see if it had the intended effect (upon an instructor or peers). The writer would make a message, then transmit it to an audience. Bitzer would say that there is an emergency to which the writer responds, like an upcoming deadline, and then their text or speech offers a more or less adequate response to that emergency.

Writing conceived in terms of **_distribution_** means that it would occur across a range of processes and encounters. There is, for instance, the event of starting a blank document and the tyranny of the blinking cursor. Your encounter with the keyboard might restrict or open up the flow of words. It might also create physical limitations as your fingers begin to cramp or your posture hunches over. You may stop, lose your place, or write across multiple days, weeks, or months. Then again, the same act of writing may occur in a group setting or a collaborative document. These interactions could energize your writing and stimulate productivity, or zap your ability to focus by creating pools of distracting conversation. As distribution, writing doesn't happen in one moment or even because of one person. Instead, it happens across many moments and with the influence of many people. In a rhetorical ecology, there isn't just one audience for writing but many. Writing would occur across distinct situations that describe how the process of writing is lived, or even how our writing outlives our unique authorship, getting picked up by other people who revise and repurpose it.

> According to Edbauer, "To say that we are connected is another way of saying that we are never outside the networked interconnections of forces, energies, rhetorics, moods, and experiences. In other words our practical consciousness is never outside the prior and ongoing structure of feeling that shape the social field."

Rhetorical ecologies highlight the importance of a shared and interactive social field. They demand an understanding of how certain speech acts, utterances, or writing circulate and proliferate. Similar to biology, where ecology refers to the relationships between organisms and their environment, rhetorical ecologies illustrate how words interact with their environment over and over again. Rhetoric from this perspective isn't static but viral; it has effects beyond what a single author could ever anticipate.

> "The intensity, force, and circulatory range of a rhetoric[al ecology] are always expanding through the mutations and new exposures attached to that given rhetoric, much like a virus. … A rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are circulating in the social field."

Examples of Rhetorical Ecologies: The Amen Break

The Rhetorical Ecology model means that rhetoric never just occurs within one isolated situation, but evolves and moves across different situations. This means that rhetoric interacts with other pressing issues or concerns of the moment. A viral intensity is how topics may be pressing or important at one moment and how those concerns may transform a given instance of rhetoric from one moment to the next. Below is a clip about the "Amen break," which explains how a given text moves across situations rather than remaining stationary.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=196#oembed-10*

As the video indicates, although you may not know it, you have likely heard the Amen break in many different advertisements and musical genres. Rather than occurring in a single situation, the Amen break happens across different moments that enable it to mean something different in each instance. As an example of a rhetorical ecology, the message undergoes a significant transformation as it moves from one situation to another; it means differently because it moves.

Examples of Rhetorical Ecologies: Keep Austin Weird

Let's consider a separate example of the rhetorical ecology that comes directly from Edbauer's article on the topic. The phrase 'Keep Austin Weird!' started in Austin, Texas, with the closure of the Sound Exchange, a popular record store. Gradually over time, more and more large businesses started entering Austin, including Urban Outfitters, Barnes and Noble, and Baja Grille, each of which is (or was) a national chain. Two local businesses, Book People Books and Waterloo Records decided to stand against Austin's stand to give a tax break to a Borders that was opening across the street from them.

> According to Steve Baroo, the owner of Book People Books: "I was talking to the people of Waterloo Records about our struggle to stop the city of Austin from providing incentives to the developer, who planned to put a chain book store across the street from our stores. I suggested that we get some bumper stickers that said: 'Keep Austin Weird,' put both our logos on them and then give them away at our stores. He decided that we should buy five-thousand stickers and saw what our customers thought."

The five thousand stickers were so popular that the stores immediately bought another ten thousand and then twenty-five thousand stickers. Almost a year later, nearly sixty thousand stickers had been distributed. Soon enough, other Austin businesses joined their call to weirdness. Local businesses began to sell T-shirts with individual logos on the front and the same 'Keep Austin Weird' logo on the back. The phrase 'Keep Austin Weird' quickly passed into the city's general culture and popular circulation. One pledge pitch for a local public radio station told listeners, "You too can work toward keeping Austin Weird by pledging to keep KOOP 917 FM on the air."

"Austin Airport, Keep Austin Weird tee shirt" by Lawrence G. Miller, CC BY NC-ND 2.0

In certain parts of Austin, it is nearly impossible to go for very long without finding some display of the slogan on a T-shirt, bumper sticker, tote bag, mug, or a local businesses billboard vowing to keep it weird. In fact, even the increasingly popular counter-slogans managed to illustrate a kind of distributed ecological spread of this rhetoric.

Appearing on T-shirts and bumper stickers throughout Austin, there is the 'Make Austin Normal' campaign, by a University of Texas business student who wanted to make a point of – and profit from – the ironic popularity of the "Weird" slogan. "Keep Austin Weird" was also taken up by large, gentrifying businesses, largely against its original intent. Its uptake by the South By Southwest (SXSW) Convention and Festival and local politicians indicated that real estate corporate interests co-opted the phrase interests. Ultimately, the message moved from one situation to the next and changed until eventually its meaning became antithetical to what it had signified at its inception.

Image by Teepublic.

We can even see evidence of this spread in Minnesota in the form of parodic "Keep Minnesota Passive-Aggressive" slogans. Ultimately Edbauer's case study investigates how 'Keep Austin Weird' is distributed through a rhetorical ecology, one going beyond the traditional boundaries of the rhetorical situation. As rhetorics and their companion counter-rhetorics move between situations, they respond to, resist, and transform the message. Sometimes these messages address the original exigence; other times, they deflect from it. When we set aside the rhetor, audience, exigence, and constraints as the only elements of rhetoric deserving of attention, we can see how textual movement extends our understanding of where, when, and how communication happens.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=196#oembed-11

Additional Resources

Models of the Rhetorical Situation

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Examples of Rhetorical Situation-Based Criticism

- Cisneros, Josue David. "Reclaiming the Rhetoric of Reies López Tijerina: Border Identity and Agency in "The Land Grant Question"." *Communication Quarterly* 60.5 (2012): 561-587.
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- Gaipa, Mark. "A Creative Psalm of Brotherhood": The (De) constructive Play in Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 93.3 (2007): 279-307.
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- Murphy, John M. "" Our mission and our moment": George W. Bush and September 11th." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6.4 (2003): 607-632.
- Murphy, John M. "Political economy and rhetorical matter." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 12.2 (2009): 303-315.
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- Winderman, Emily. "S (anger) goes postal in The Woman Rebel: Angry rhetoric as a collectivizing moral emotion." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 17.3 (2014): 381-420.
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CHAPTER 11: THE SETTLER SITUATION

This chapter is about "the settler [colonial] situation." The first section of the chapter introduces some of the defining concepts related to settler colonialism, describes the role of rhetoric, and offers several examples of how this "situation" continues to arise within popular narratives today. The second section is a lecture by Dr. Michael Lechuga entitled "*Incomunicable*," which discusses the ways that the university itself is implicated in an ongoing settler situation.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: Defining the Settler Situation (Video, ~30m)
- Part 1: Defining the Settler Situation (Audio Only, ~30m)
- Part 2: *Incomunicable* (Audio Only, ~34m)

Correction: Part 1 of the recorded lecture above incorrectly states that the island of Kaho'olawe

remains US Federal property and that Indigenous peoples have been banned from traveling there since the 1965 "Operation Sailor Hat" bombing tests. The island was transferred to the jurisdiction of the state of Hawaii in 1994, and the Hawaii State Legislature established the Kahoʻolawe Island Reserve to restore and oversee the island and its surrounding waters. As of the time of the lecture's recording in Fall 2021, Kahoʻolawe can be used only for native Hawaiian cultural, spiritual, and subsistence purposes.

Read this Next

- Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Tabula Rasa* 38 (2021): 61-111.
- Lechuga, Michael. "An anticolonial future: reassembling the way we do rhetoric." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17.4 (2020): 378-385.

Part 1: Defining the Settler Situation

Last week we talked about the *rhetorical situation.* The rhetorical situation accounts for why what is said is said, what this speech responded to, and its effects. If the rhetorical situation creates a specific historical account of a single moment of speech, then the *settler* situation describes a specific set of characteristics (e.g. motives, narratives, relationships). These characteristics, in turn, describe a general set of power relations that have shaped communication across a range of contexts. According to Lorenzo Veracini, who coins the phrase "settler-colonial situation":

> The *settler colonial situation* is characterised by a settler capacity to control the population economy as a marker of a substantive type of sovereignty ... [and] is associated with a particular state of mind and a specific narrative form. Under these circumstances, the possibility of ultimately discontinuing/decolonising settler colonial forms remains problematic. *(Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview, 12)*

According to Veracini, the settler-colonial situation is primarily one that manages a "population economy." This means that settler colonialism facilitates the mass displacement of people and mobilizes them in on behalf of capital. After being displaced, governing this population's "economy" means to discover, extract, and hoard the value stolen from Indigenous lands. After this process is complete and the land is rendered unusable, the settler moves on to a new frontier for extraction and conquest.

Poster for *For All Mankind,* a television show about a fictional resource war fought over the moon.

Veracini also explains that the settler-colonial situation describes a long-term and widely-held way of thinking. The settler-colonial mindset has ongoing concerns with existential threats and maintains a paranoid fear of ultimate decolonization. Settler anxieties include worries about the degeneration of the settler social body, apprehensions about the debilitating results of climate, remoteness, geopolitical position, racial contamination, demographic imbalances, and concerns about the possibility that the land will ultimately turn against the settler project.

When we are thinking of the settler-colonial situation, we are also thinking about a moment that organizes our rhetoric. If the *rhetorical situation* describes an arrangement of exigence, audience, and constraints, the settler-colonial situation describes a different mode of arrangement, sometimes called an *assemblage*. Unlike the rhetorical situation, the settler situation is not a concept that emerges from the traditional Greek canon of thought. In fact, experts and scholars who study settler colonialism often critique Aristotle because of his documented defenses of slavery, wartime violence, and class elitism. As described below, the assemblage of settler colonialism "arranges" *peoples*, *technologies*, *psychology*, and *networks of power*. The sections below offer an overview of each of these elements.

Settler Colonialism Arranges Peoples.

These people include *indigenous* and *exogenous* peoples, or the original inhabitants of a place and the people

trafficked by settlers. It also includes *migrants, immigrants, emigrants* as different ways of describing the movement of peoples. *Migrant* references the general fact of this movement, while *emigrant* and *immigrant* are legal terms designating one's status relative to the land left behind or the "new" lands toward which one travels. Settler colonialism also constitutes the identity of the *settler,* which takes a variety of different forms. The *settler* may, for instance, take the form of the institutional figures of authority that enact forced migration from indigenous lands, police protests, protects the property of the settler from indigenous claims, and patrol the entry in and out of borders. In American popular culture, the *settler* also takes the form of "heroic" figures such as the cowboy, the fighter pilot, and the time-traveling father figure.

📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-1

Trailer for *Wild Wild Country* (2016)

The above trailer from the documentary *Wild Wild Country* offers one illustration of how *people* are arranged by settler colonialism. On the one hand, it shows how the Rajneesh community settled in Antelope, Oregon, where they were received with hostility from Antelope residents. However, as the descendants of European families that displaced these residents ignore their own status as "settlers" and that they occupy lands stewarded by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Nez Perce Tribe. They are astonished that the Rajneeshis – a group who, as "people of like persuasion," are like *them* – would migrate to and settle the Antelope area. According to these residents, the Rajneeshis threaten to "literally wipe out the culture" of the existing white inhabitants. The irony, of course, is that the settler ancestors of these present-day residents perpetrated the very same 'wiping out' that they now fear.

Settler Colonialism Arranges Technologies.

The settler situation also promotes the creation and distribution of specific kinds of technology, such as those intended to make migrants and borderlands more visible for purposes of policing. These technologies include databases, drones, cameras, weapons, vehicles, and structures. They involve the support of corporations, government agencies, and political parties. Together, they create a site of significant financial and human investment dedicated to maintaining boundaries predicated on an imagined threat posed by those foreign to the nation. As Dr. Michael Lechuga explains:

> Those living along the border between México and the United States (US) might never see a physical, 2,000-mile

long wall between the two nations. If there is a border wall, it will likely be a virtual wall. I say this for two reasons: frst, the US has invested tens of billions of dollars in the latest surveillance technologies over the last three decades, to create a network of sensing devices to track the movements of migrants across that border (Ofce of the Inspector General, 2005; US Customs and Border Protection, 2015a). These include seismic sensors buried in the desert, infrared cameras mounted on Hum-Vs and Predator Drones, and biometric face scanners at ports of entry. With most of that technology already in place, a physical wall that spans 2,000 miles seems both redundant and unrealistic.

Settler Colonialism Arranges <u>Psychologies</u>.

Settler psychologies are developed to justify and prolong colonial governance. One of these psychological dispositions is called disavowal, which takes the form of the statement "I know very well [I am doing X] but nonetheless [I will continue doing it because of Y]." As discussed in Chapter 6, disavowal is a way of cultivating beliefs that give us an escape from the reality that we inhabit. For example, a person may join a company with the intent not to compromise their values. However, when confronted with a situation where those values are tested, they may tell themselves, "I'll just wait until I get a promotion or have greater stability, and then I'll act according to what I know is right." That is disavowal: that person "knows very well [that they are not acting in accordance with their values] but nonetheless [they are able to justify continuing to act in the same way].

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-2*

"Follow the Frog" as an example of *disavowal*

A *settler* disavowal takes the form of a justification in which "I know that [my actions] perpetuate settler colonial governance, but nonetheless [I will continue acting ways that perpetuate it]." In the "Follow the Frog" video clip above, the brand leverages disavowal as their major sales pitch: their customers know very well that [commerce is destroying the rainforest] but they nonetheless will [continue engaging in commerce because colonialist efforts to help the rainforest are doomed to fail]. The ad presents no other option: either buy more responsibly sourced products or engage in savior-ism to rescue the Earth's precious resources. Because the latter is unreasonable, there is no choice but the former.

Disavowal can also appear in subtler ways. Choosing to call nations or continents "under-developed" is disavowal: it reveals that the user knows very well that there are deep, entrenched inequalities between different nations but nonetheless situates blame on those countries for a lack of development. A preferable term might be "over-exploited," which puts the onus back upon "developed" nations for their role in producing economic and inequalities.

Settler Colonialism Arranges Networks of <u>Power</u>.

One key function of the settle colonial assemblage is to use the conduits of capital, communication, and power to create and re-create the conditions of its own existence, perpetuating itself into the future. To accomplish this goal, the settler-colonial assemblage will elevate its own narratives about indigenous people to displace their authentic or original culture and traditions.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-4*

The video above addresses the public dispute over the former University of Illinois mascot, the fictional "Chief Illiniwek." As the speaker notes, even the indigenous drumbeat is inauthentic and perpetuates colonial myths initiated by Hollywood producers. The settler situation arranges *power* by seizing control of a dominant narrative and restricting representation to favorable settler types.

What's <u>Rhetorical</u> about Settler Colonialism?

Settler Colonialism is <u>not</u> rhetorical in at least one important way. In "Decolonization is not a metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang take issue with the way that words like "decolonize" are used in vague or abstract ways. Decolonization is not the same as an institution's equity and inclusion initiatives; classrooms and syllabi cannot be "decolonized" by admitting a more diverse student body or adding a certain number of Indigenous authors. Decolonization, they argue, is about *the repatriation of land*. For that reason decolonization is not a metaphor; it cannot be the vehicle for a tenor other than the restoration of land to its former Indigenous inhabitants.

The Settler Situation implicates communication in other ways. For instance, Settler Colonialism exercises control over shared cultural meaning-making, elevating the colonist's preferred modes of communication while erasing the traditions, language, and beliefs of the colonized. In *The Semiotic Conquest of America,* Tzvetan Todorov writes that "the efficient conquest of information was always what brought about the downfall of the Aztec Empire." The systematic elimination and replacement of Indigenous language by Cortes and European colonizers was a way of destruction of the historical record, forcing it into secrecy. Cortes was motivated "to control the information he received" both in order to eliminate the indigenous knowledge he encountered and to take advantage of "how others [namely Indigenous peoples] were going to perceive him." The destruction of the archive is evident because Cortes understood the myth of Quetzalcoatl's return — and then positioned himself as its architect. For example, "the idea of identifying Cortes with Quetzalcoatl

definitely existed in the year immediately *after* the conquest," but not before. Negative erasure is the removal of myth, the removal of history from the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas; the destruction of this archive.

Narrative Allegories of Settler Colonialism

The Settler Situation is not just a way to account for the past dispossession of Indigenous lands. It is also a very present element in popular cinema narratives. Science fiction in particular uses narrative elements to recreate fictional scenarios that depict the conditions of settler colonialism. Often, aliens "invade" earth (e.g. *Independence Day, Battle Los Angeles*) and exact a kind of colonial violence over humankind. Other times, films depict "the border" or "frontier" as the site of apocalyptic danger (e.g. *Terminator: Dark Fate, Logan*). The word "allegory" refers to the ways a given narrative may invoke a scenario beyond itself, playing out real-world situations and power dynamics as a fictional re-imagining of our shared future.

> 📰 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-5

Opening scenes of *Men in Black* (1995)

Allegory is, for instance, what allows the above narrative to play on the double-meaning of the word "alien." In the above clip from *Men in Black*, border patrol agents pull over a van of migrants, presumably to detain them. As soon as the passengers disembark, a pair of suited men whose jurisdiction exceeds the border agents appear. Seizing control of the situation, one of the men begins to interview the passengers with short greetings in Spanish. After encountering the one passenger who appears unable to understand the agent's greeting, they release the other passengers and detain the "alien." During the interrogation, it is discovered that the odd passenger is an extraterrestrial, and upon charging at the border agent, is promptly vaporized.

The segment carries a number of settler-colonial themes. The agents, for instance, uphold a myth that all the migrants would speak the same language by vetting the true alien based on whether they speak Spanish. In fact, there are a number of Indigenous languages that migrants might speak, including Nahuatl, Maya, Otomí, Mixteco, Zapoteco, Totonaco, Chol, and Mazateco. The agents also illustrate how the settler presumes that "alien" life is inherently disposable, vaporizing the alien to protect the border patrol agent despite the patrol's refusal to take instructions from a higher authority.

The Frontier and the "Settler Hero"

The US-Mexico border is frequently the mythic backdrop for imagining the outcomes of settler colonialism as

a technological dystopia. When the threat doesn't come from beyond a literal, physical border, it comes from a *temporal* (or time-based) border beyond the horizon of present perceptions: an apocalyptic future.

The western is an example of a popular literary and cinematic narrative that features a cowboy as its protagonist. Dr. Michael Lechuga describes this character as a more general type that recurs across different narratives (e.g. *Star Wars, Westworld*), and calls this frontier figure "the settler hero":

> Settlers do not see themselves as extenders of a particular (European or US) state sovereignty, they "see themselves as founders of political orders, they also interpret their collective efforts in terms of an inherent sovereign claim that travels with them and is ultimately, if not immediately, autonomous from the colonising metropole." Settler identity is characterized by "permanent movement *and* sovereign capacity." Settlers reject an imperial colonial persona for a uniquely mobile, individualized, and exploitative sovereignty that is produced in that denunciation of the colonial order. In rejecting the colonial metropole, thus, the settler seeks to acquire yet "unsettled lands" (*terra nullius*) on which to create a new political and economic formation.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-3

Theatrical trailer for *Law and Order* (1953)

In the film *Law and Order*, the "settler hero" is a white and masculine figure who occupies a dangerous territorial town and is self-authorized to use violence in order to bring residents and Indigenous peoples into compliance with his authority. The trailer describes the American West as a "wild," "magnificent," and "untamed" frontier that was also the site of gratuitous danger and violence. It presents "heroes" in the form of "lawmen" who alone are allowed to use violence to quell violence. This iconography, in turn, informs how a subset of American voters have repeatedly projected this role onto political figures such as Ronald Reagan, who claimed to bring order or balance to the "wild west" of American politics.

Settler Colonialism and the Future

When the mythic "frontier" of settler colonial narrative is not a literal spatial border (e.g. the border between civilized/uncivilized lands, between nations, or between the Earth and Space), it is a time-border, imagining a dystopic future for the current settler situation. In this case, the settler's imagined "enemy" comes from the future and must be extinguished to ensure a livable human future. Often, the agencies of this dystopia are the technologies developed by the settler themselves, which have spiraled out of control and now threaten the whole settler way of life that birthed it.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-6

Theatrical Trailer for *The Tomorrow War* (2021)

The alien-invasion genre of science fiction often stages a settler-colonial situation in which an enemy threatens to perpetuate colonial violence against humankind. The proposed solution of these films is that the only solution to human genocide is similar to colonial violence. In the example of *The Tomorrow War* shown above, the main character travels to the future where he meets his much older daughter, who is fighting the "tomorrow" war against a band of monstrous aliens. Ultimately, to win the war and save his daughter's life, the protagonist discovers that he must kill the alien "queen." The film thus guarantees his daughter's – and humans' — future by eliminating the "alien" other's ability to reproduce and inhabit the planet. This is by no means the *only* solution presented by the film, which argues that the "future war" begins due to anthropogenic climate change, which releases the aliens from a thawed Arctic glacier. In other words, *The Tomorrow War* presents colonial violence as a reasonable alternative to dramatic climate action, which it depicts as destined to fail.

Part 2: *Incomunicable*

A(n Audio) Lecture by Dr. Michael Lechuga from the University of New Mexico

Below, you will find the written transcript of Dr. Lechuga's talk. I recommend listening to the audio and following along with the written transcript.

Thank you so much for joining us for this, and what I think is a very exciting speaker series and I'm really humbled and excited to introduce you to Dr. Michael Lechuga. Dr. Michael Lechuga is an assistant professor at the University of New Mexico. He researches Latinx communication studies, rhetoric, vibration, and settler colonial studies, as well as affect studies, Latinx futurism, surveillance, and film studies. Dr. Lechuga is also writing his second book, Alien Affects, which illuminates the complex relationships between Hollywood alien invasion film industries and the industries tasked with securing the Mexico-U.S border. I also think it's important to speak a little bit about the context of Dr. Lechuga's talk today, Incomunicable: How the University Participates in Settler Colonialism, and how he came to this topic. So, from my understanding, interested in imagining and creating this decolonial university, as well as inspired by Dr. Erick Torrico, speaking about the colonial encounter and how that is marked with the rendering of the 'other', hence, Incommunicado.

The decolonial university in Incommunicado brought Dr. Lechuga into this research about this compulsory indigenous erasure in the U.S. at large, which is, of course, a large part perpetuated by the coloniality of U.S.

higher education. So, I hope that was a good introduction of your talk, Dr. Lechuga. I'm really excited, and I guess you can go ahead and get started with your talk, Incomunicable: How the University Participates in Settler Colonialism.

Well, thank you very much for that great introduction. Of course, thanks to the I-4C Collective, for organizing this lecture series here at Arizona State, and for inviting me to participate. I want to thank all of my friends, of course, at the Hugh Downs School of Communication, but especially Professor Amira de la Garza, for thinking that my ideas would have an audience here. I'm also grateful to the group of graduate students who I'll be getting the chance to meet with at the end of today's talk. I know that your time is valuable, so I really do appreciate that.

I resist making land acknowledgments, like the ones at my university, and Arizona State, and that other universities have written, which are admittedly just a first step in recognizing Native sovereignty. Some, like Howie Echo Hawk, a native comic and activist, have criticized the performance of land acknowledgment, insisting that it serves really nothing more than an empty gesture. So, as a Mestizo, I insist on only acknowledging Native lands, Indigenous peoples, Indigenous ways of knowing, and Indigenous practices of world-making, but I also recognize my role in participating in indigenous erasure. For me, part of this recognition will take the form of a donation, of the honorarium, for today's talk, to the Red Nation, a group of activists with a chapter in Albuquerque who are 'dedicated to the liberation of Native peoples from capitalism and colonialism.' They offer ways for Latinx and Mestizx peoples to build coalition in liberating Native peoples from the entanglements of white settler modernity on this continent, and especially in places like Albuquerque, where those material inequities are most pertinent. Their mission is based in education and media justice, so I think that it aligns a lot with the mission of what many of us in communication studies already do. So maybe instead, consider this a land disacknowledgement. I disacknowledge the centrality of settler colonial land use, settler colonial citizenship norms, a single settler worldview, the practices of settler worldmaking, which, too often, become practices of settler world breaking. And all of these practices are found in nearly every aspect of our daily lives here in the United States. In reality, this is the focus of my research, in general: How to disavow the centrality of settler knowledge production. For today's talk, I will be speaking specifically on how the university is implicated in this process. I'll start with a few examples.

So, last month, one charter grade school in Ogden, Utah allowed parents to opt out of the Black History Month curriculum. They claim that parents were allowed to exercise their civil rights by denying their children a part of U.S. history that would contextualize the violent colonial presence of european descendants on this continent. The Montessori school later backtracked. They said that in the future they would work with parents on an individual basis, which really only means that they'll continue to allow folks to opt out of this practice, but really not make it public. In addition to this, 5 states in the United States now, Iowa, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri, and South Dakota have introduced legislation to defund public schools that teach the 1619 Project. As many of you know, the 1619 Project is a curriculum developed in collaboration with Nikole Hannah-Jones of the New York Times magazine. It centers the arrival of enslaved peoples from the continent of Africa that were sold to settlers, ushering in a 400 year project of exploitation. When the previous President of the

United States tried to strip the Department of Education funding from schools who taught the curriculum, he argued that this would "teach students to hate their own country". Now, for many folks in Arizona, this might sound familiar. In 2010, Governor John Brewer signed SB 2281, a law that essentially banned ethnic studies in Arizona Public Schools. The bill was a combination of then State Superintendent of Instruction Tom Horn's attack on the Tucson school districts who developed a Mexican-American curriculum for the large number of Mestizx and Latinx learners in the district. Horn argued, also successfully, that ethnic studies would train non-white learners to "hate America". So, for me, the goal of all of these examples seems to be punishing school districts who teach a history of decentralized white settler paradigm, and to silence the voices of those who were colonized, with the goal of reproducing the same sets of relationships between white settler citizens and those they subjugated in the name of colonization. The idea that somehow these curricula teach students to hate America shows the primary preoccupation with U.S. education, in my opinion – That teaching students to love the myth of what America is & rendering all others silent is what we would consider education. This is a practice of rendering others 'incommunicable', or incommunicable. This is a dark side of communication, and really this dark side of communication is central to colonial power. I and others argue that making sense of this dynamic really should be the responsibility of scholars in our field, communication studies, but in humanities in general. We shouldn't assume that our ways of knowing the world are always productive.

To sort of frame this idea of 'incommunicado', or rendering folks and lands incommunicable, I turn to Erick Torrico, whose conception of the five communications that pertain to coloniality are imagined through a sort of taxonomy that I'll share with you. For Torrico, the first form of communication, or colonial communication, would be what he described as 'pre-colonial communication'. This is not very much studied in our field. It would require, really, an investment into the study of native languages. I also think it would require an epistemology of relationship with the natural world. Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, a Zapotec scholar, discusses that land was not empty when colonizers arrived, rather, it was pristine precisely because of the symbiotic existence enjoyed by Indigenous groups with their environment. The knowledge produced as a result of this relationship is widely ignored in the humanities. I would argue that this is a form of communication networked through ecosystems that can tell us just as much about our human condition as, perhaps, other approaches to communication.

The second area Torrico describes is the communication of colonial encounter. This is where the Indigenous natives as well as the land stewarded by the Indigenous are rendered 'incommunicable'. This action of rendering one incommunicable justifies the dehumanization of Indigenous others by colonizing groups, and the exploitability and extraction of economies that are put into place by these colonizing groups. In the field of rhetoric, José Ángel Maldonado writes that incomunicación has long been a tool for political isolation: "Language, among other forms of communication, is at the center of who is, and who is not, sought to be worthy of humanity." And in reality, this is what remains a primary tool dispossession by settlers, and the seller government, in the United States. This is our foreign policy, our immigration policy, our environmental policy, and today I'm going to talk about how this has become the U.S. education policy and university systems around the country.

The third kind of communication, quickly, is communication that pertains to colonialism, or what Torrico calls colonial communication: the modes by which a colonizing group distributes and maintains control over the political, social, and economic hierarchies. Walter Mignolo refers to this as the rhetoric of modernity. In a recent forum in communication and critical cultural studies, I also describe how this form of communication, or what we call rhetoric, the form of communication that celebrates public address, that celebrates presidential rhetoric and the rhetoric of the descendants of white settler colonizers, is, in reality, a celebration of this third kind of communication that Torrico refers to as colonial communication.

The fourth type of communication, and I think one that many of us in these circles are familiar with is decolonial communication. It's communication that speaks to the resistance of coloniality. Still centralizing colonialism in its power to shape new futures, but resisting that power. So Tuck and Yang remind us that colonization is not a metaphor, and, thus, the decolonial communication should strive for a deprogramming. Too often, though, especially for those who claim to do colonial work simply out of the happenstance of their identity or out of the start of orientation of being interested in the kind of work are really just doing it as a metaphor, and I think rather we should think about the coloniality as a practice of strategizing the end of colonial power through the material recognition of Inidigenous sovereignty. For me, this means nothing short of land back. I look to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's work, especially her book, Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States, as an exemplary work of this type of decolonial research.

Finally, there's a communication beyond the constraints of the colonial, or what Torrico calls 'comunicación humanitario', humanitarian communication. This kind of communication is a future-looking orientation, and it can imagine the ends of colonialism into a bifurcated, multiple future for sovereign peoples. It's a world where new modes of subjectivities and relationships with lands and waters and air is one that's symbiotic, one that returns to what Altamirano-Jiménez referred to as this perfect symbiosis. This is not necessarily post-colonial, because I think that carries within a certain set of assumptions and connotations, but it is, again, "comunicación humanitario', or one that exists in a human world beyond colonialism.

For me, then, the importance of this sort of taxonomy is one that, when we render things as 'incommunicable', I think that it's important to think about the metaphor of a hard drive. So, when we delete something from a hard drive, we don't necessarily make it disappear from that. It's etched into the hard drive. When you delete something from your computer's hard drive, you're actually deleting the pathway, the language coding that connects the interface with the information. So, when something is rendered 'incomunicable', it's not necessarily disappeared, or it hasn't been removed from the face of the earth. Rather, the pathway, the knowledge, the ways of knowing that part entailed in that are erased. And reconnecting might be just a matter of finding those pathways again.

And so, despite what appears to be a chronological list of five communications, I think it's also important to consider that these are all layered and interwoven into one another. I mean, to see an example of this, look no further than the university, a place where a few, or maybe even all five of these kinds of communication are happening at the same time. So when one part of the university might be working on a project, the preservation and revitalization of Native languages, while someone down the hall is teaching a course on real

estate speculation. Yet, somebody else is down the hall teaching another class on decolonial approaches to XYZ in terms of paradigms. There are many types of communications for Torrico that happen simultaneously, but I'm here to suggest that while these sort of happen in multiple ways, and talk with each other, the university system in the United States really is primed to reproduce a specific type of settler communication, settler colonial communication. This is really the brand of American universities today, and the characterization of those universities to sort of disavow the history of Indigenous removal, and then to promote an epistemology of U.S. settler colonialism, I think, is part of how we come to grapple with that history, and also where we need to make these interventions. So, in other words, producing a single colonial worldview, and rendering all others 'incomunicable', is at the heart of what many of our public universities do today. And for me, this ongoing project, which is sustained by numerous modes of production in the university, especially those that pertain specifically to knowledge production, are in need of interrogation. Institutions of state learning that are implicated in this process of rendering peoples and lands incomunicable are guilty, if they are built from the wealth made off of stolen land, and if they are actively pursuing a single-universal worldview.

So to make this case, I want to talk briefly about the legacy of land-grant universities in the United States, and how the perception of higher education today is really shaped by this legacy. For those of you who attended last week, we were privy to an amazing performance by an amazing group of scholars who sort of introduced us to this idea of how disposition of Native peoples begot the land-grant university, and how many of the institutions that we're connected to are, in some ways, networked to those original land grants. The Land-Grant Act of 1862, for me, is an example of a federal policy enacted to benefit individual citizens, and U.S. citizenship directly. It is often referred to as the Morrill Land-Grant Act, named for Justin Morill, a Vermont senator who enacted the bill. It was originally proposed in 1857, and it took 5 years to pass, mostly out of objection from Southern states, and from some others who thought the bill lacked other elements of training, like engineering and military training. But the demand for agricultural colleges at the time was so high, that Morrill persuaded others to enact. I think that ironically, though, the reason why food, or agriculture was such an important mechanism at the time was because of the insufficient ability for settlers to use and create a symbiotic relationship with the land. They were destroying land faster than they could produce the food to feed the growing number of settlers, and the panic spurred Justin Morrill to write this bill. Also, 5 years later, in the midst of the Civil War, actually, where we have no congressional members from Southern states, the vote passed and became a congressional act. The bill basically took Native lands that were seized, or obtained through treaty, and sold them, along with the mineral rights and extraction rights. In order to find agricultural colleges and universities in each of the, what at the time was 34 states, but now is in all 50 states. Each state was granted 30,000 acres of land by the United States government, and, along with agricultural education, the bill did implement engineering and military training as part of the core curriculum, added to the classics curriculum that was taught at private universities at the time. So, while most states in the West seized and sold lands within the state borders, for example, like New Mexico and Arizona's land-grants were built on lands sold and seized from within New Mexico and Arizona respectively, other universities like Cornell, MIT, and Penn State used the sale of unceded lands in places like Wisconsin, California, and the Dakotas, to profit students

back East. So, in many cases, land-grant universities still own the script, which is the rights to the mineral and the land. And these scripts can be sold for somewhere upwards of 10 to 20 times the original amount. The plated amount is sort of an investment that is still continuing to pay off dividends for universities, and again, these dividends are off the backs of stolen land. Signed the same year that the Homestead Act was signed, again both of these represent the direct transfer of Indigenous lands and value extracted from those lands to the hands of private citizens. If you add to that, the training that's offered by these universities, then, not only are citizens being – are profiting off of the land, but then are being trained to further develop that land in a way that benefits settler colonialism.

I'm going to post a link here, in the chat, and if you get a chance, I really encourage you all to check out LandGrabU.org. The authors — Lee and Ahtone — in that project describes in detail how through cession of land, the term used to describe the forced forfeiture of land, usually through a manifestation of violence, led to the investment in what we now call land-grant universities. According to the researchers, there's vast evidence suggesting that the act was actually intended to fortify U.S.'s capacity to dispossess Native peoples from lands, which affected almost 215 Indigenous tribes. The effort transferred the value of more than 10.5 million acres of land, and, into revenue, the United States would eventually use to build universities with the mission of educating farmers, engineers, and soldiers. The website, which again I shared the link with you all, it details not only these large transfers, but it goes into the sale of each parcel of land that was dispossessed and how they have directly impacted each states' land grant. The sheer volume of land, and the amount of money that was made from that transfer is just astonishing. But when seen at the individualized, localized level, you get a sense of how many dispossessions had to take place in order for, what we consider our modern university system, to even be operating. Some of the most notable examples of land-grants include the University of Arizona, New Mexico State, the University of Minnesota, the University of California, Texas A&M, dozens of others that are Research I universities, some of which maybe some of us work at. And so for some state systems like Minnesota and Michigan, that land-grant is really central to the state's agricultural and scientific military medical training, but for most states, like New Mexico, this mission has been networked through the state systems. So, nearly all states whose public education system is networked in this way, has distributed the land-grant mission to all of its public universities, right? This mission, this quest for universal vision for knowledge production, again, contributes to the dispossession of lands of Native peoples, renders both Native peoples and lands incomunicable.

I think that we can see this and the way that it operates in our colleges, in our universities. For today's agricultural college, the goal has been to teach the methods of turning land into profitable food sources, a process that renders lands, again, 'incomunicable', destroying what Altamirano-Jimenez describes as that symbiotic harmony. Engineering schools, their goal is to build the machinery of future colonization, whether that be tools of war, tools of exploration, tools to terraform lands once stewarded by Native peoples into permanent settler encampments, right? The goals of engineers are not to meet the lands of the environment, the goals are to meet the demands of the settler imaginary that continues to grapple with a crumbling environment, begot by settler imaginary, and as a settler imaginary builds more technologies, we see those

technologies really just turn into more coloniality. Medical schools were built to extend the lives of settler classes, to ensure the production and reproduction of settler populations. Law schools reproduce settler sovereignty by teaching generations of lawyers to maintain jurisdiction over Native lands and people. Business schools teach us how to protect and multiply white settler wealth, I mean even in the social sciences we oftentimes reproduce settler classifications of race and gender and ability, thinking that we're doing critical or decolonial work. When scholars use these elements as variables, really they end up just recreating the same distinctive differentiates that motivate white settler colonial population productions in the first place. I even look at museums, and other archives that we hold at universities, where the practice of rendering something archivable is really, sort of like a cultural taxonomy. It's about rendering something dead, or unalive, and then categorizing it within our own single vision of what history is. These practices of our modern university really all participate, for me, in this spirit of a land-grant, which has been modelled in higher education through the state university system. The model is driven really by a single ideological motive: reproducing settler colonial logics, the economic machinery, social values, and legal framework for the advancement of the settler project.

But I don't think this has to be the case; and in fact, the spirit of the I4C Collective has been to push us, to think about what this university might look like, or other universities might look like if we were to really invest our creative capital and our collective intelligence into bringing about this change. For me, this change looks like the pluraversity, not the university. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, a Brazilian author, who writes in his book, *The End of the Cognitive Empire*, that while Foucault describes the difference between knowledge and ways of knowing in his project in archaeology, the critique of knowledge by Foucault and others, and the attention paid to that critique has really left little room for the celebration of ways of knowing the world; multiple ways of knowing the world. For de Sousa Santos, this dynamic is embedded in the erasure of what he calls, "epistemologies of the South". The innumerable ways of knowing the world which fall outside of the singular colonial epistemology of the North: "The epistemologies of the South affirm and valorize the differences that remain after the hierarchies have been eliminated. Rather than abstract universality, they promote pluraversality, a kind of thinking that promotes decolonization, Creolization, or Mestizaje through the intercultural translation." So, rather than reproducing a single ideology of colonial knowledge production, why not make a university into a space where learners can engage with a wealth of possibilities, that multiple ways of knowing the world might offer. This is not just thinking about interdisciplinarity, though. Because, for me, interdisciplinarity ties multiple strands of the same colonial network together to reproduce that same network. We should really be thinking about the possibilities of opening up the university to new ways of knowing the world, and not just rendering the world knowable. This is an important distinction, I think, between the university and the pluraversity. And this word bills primarily on scholars like Arturo Escobar, and others like Walter Mignolo and Katherine Walsh, to develop a notion of pluraversity that not only embraces multiple ways of knowing the world, or Southern epistemologies, but also celebrates the multiplicity of cultural orientations to the natural world. In my opinion, the notion of the pluraversity is not simply about transforming the university, which means transforming the land and the capital and the people, into a site where multiple worlds can be sustained. What if we were able to use the capacity, use this energy of mobilizing

change, to really tackle one of the biggest crises facing humanity today. So, that said, I'll sort of end my talk by advocating for one specific way that beneficiaries of the university, you and I, can leverage our power to change the coloniality embedded within the university.

First and foremost, I think that the university must become a site of reconnection to the natural world. In our time of global crisis, when Western thought has severed our connection to the environment, it's really time to transfer the university into a place where reconnecting to the natural world is embedded into every aspect of the institution. Just to be clear, studying the natural world is not the same thing as rebuilding the connections. We have been studying the natural environment for decades, and despite that, very little has been done to push people back into connection with the environment. In fact, I think that things have really only gotten worse. For me, the pluraversity must support efforts to connect people with lands at all levels, including an investment in Indigenous ways of relating to the natural world. From agriculture to astrophysics, the pluraversity should be a site where multiple ways of knowing the world, and really knowing the cosmos, are rejuvenated and taught, not just from a single Western orientation of science, but from multiple ways of understanding and knowing nature and the cosmos. Business schools should not be teaching students how to invest in stock futures, but rather should be teaching about the economic value of symbiosis with nature. We should be investing in natural and environmental futures, and we shouldn't necessarily be thinking about the value that's implicit in minerals and extraction, but we should really be thinking about the value implicit in the human capacity to build networks in nature. I feel that every aspect of the university will ultimately transform, and, for me, rendering the natural world comunicable, communicable, is its new mission. Mignolo and Walsh describe this as relationality: "Relationality doesn't simply include other practices or concepts into our own. Relationality is what some of Andean Indigenous scholars, including Nina Pacari, Fernando

Huanacuni Mamani, and Felix Patzi Paco, refer to as vincularidad. Vincularidad, or relationality, is the awareness of the integral relation of an interdependence on all living organisms, of which humans are only a small part, with both territory and the cosmos." Vincularidad, for me, refers to both the sovereignty and the interconnectedness of multiple systems that all contribute to what we know as the natural world. This concept recalls Altamirano-Jiménez's work, where she describes the need to "center the ontological relationship between the human and non-human worlds, but also engage actions that uphold and maintain Indigenous relationality." Right, so it's not, for her, just about recognizing that connection, but about foregrounding that connection. Vincularidad demonstrates a commitment to a recovery, it demonstrates a commitment to a rejuvenation of knowledges that have been erased. But not erased off of the earth, simply rendered 'incomunicable'. We have the capacity through this type of research to render, then again, that natural world communicable. I think that this is really the spirit of what Erick Torrico described as 'comunicación humanitario', and in reality, for me this is what the humanities in general should be striving for.

I just want to briefly mention that as part of my research on vincularidad and relationality, I've been working with a group of scholars here at UNM to develop a pilot study on multi-user virtual environments. As part of this study, we are going to be testing Altamirano-Jiménez's hypothesis. We anticipate that folks who participate in this environmental simulation who are willing to embody the natural environment, will start to develop

relationships with other users within the simulation. We anticipate that the strategies that folks develop in the virtual simulation can be carried over to folks who are living in the real world, and our hope is that these epistemoligies, especially Indigenous feminist epistemologies become foregrounded as ways for us to think about restructuring our research focuses, not only in the humanities, but across the university.

So, I'll end by saying that commitment to a new vision of vincularidad, or relationality of higher education, can foreclose the practices of rendering peoples and lands 'incomunicable', which have been present in U.S. public university systems for roughly 150 years. In conceptualizing the pluraversity in the United States this way, my hope is to shift away from the land-grant model of the university towards a conception of a land-back university, right? So on one level, this means organizing behind a mission of promoting Indigenous sovereignty, as la paperson or Wang Yang writes about in A Third University is Possible – I completely agree with this. But on another level, I strongly urge us to think about how reassembling the energies and the resources of our institutions, can really tackle the most imminent crisis facing humans today, and that's global climate catastrophe. Let's imagine together for a second that we can live in a future where students in our institutions learn to connect again with a world that has been rendered mute by the settler colonial project in the United States, rather than simply participating in that process of rendering it 'incomunicable.' So, I invite all of you into dialogue about these ideas through a question and answer session, but before I just wanted to say thank you all so much for attending, thank you to the organizers of this event for having me and allowing me to share my ideas. It's really been an honor, thank you.

Part 3: Post-, De-, Anti-, and Settler-Colonialism

In his article, "(Re)Bordering the Civic Imaginary: Rhetoric, Hybridity, and Citizenship in *La Gran Marcha*," Josue David Cisneros describes reactions to "anti-immigrant, anti-Latino discourse" to illustrate "how protestors enacted US citizenship, simultaneously drawing undocumented immigrants into the US national community and challenging the very process of bordering endemic to citizenship." ("La Gran Marcha," p.28) Protestors, in other words, used a rhetoric that performed citizenship and questioned the governing way of separating citizens from non-citizens. For that reason, rhetoric offered a way to *resist* colonialism. As used by the protestors, it established the fact that the protestors belonged as citizens while resisting the definitions of belonging that purposely excluded undocumented immigrants from citizenship.
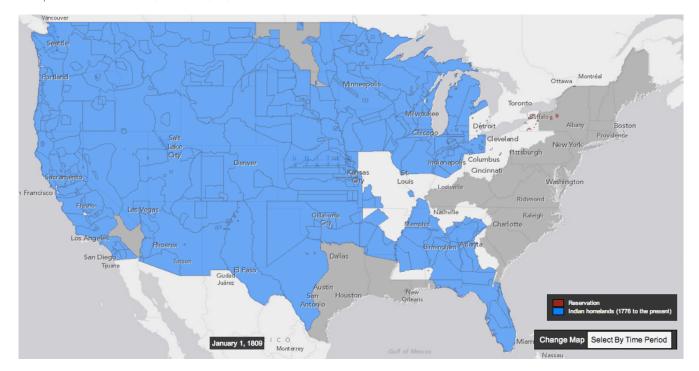
There are several terms that describe different kinds of rhetorical resistance toward colonialism. These include **post-colonialism**, **anti-colonialism**, **de-colonialism**, and **settler-colonialism.** Althoug there is substantial overlap between these terms, each designates a unique orientation to "the colony" and the larger system we call "colonialism." As Lorenzo Veracini explains in the quotation below, there are two different connotations for the term "colony." A colony is both (1) a political unit of organization that is ruled by a group originating from outside of the colonized territory (i.e. *exogenous*) and (2) the self-reproduction of the

exogenous group within a colonized territory. Different terms foreground different aspects of "the colony." For example, the term **settler-colonialism** captures both of these connotations.

> "Colony" as a term can have two main different connotations. A colony is both a political body that is dominated by an exogenous agency, and an exogenous entity that reproduces itself in a given environment (in both cases, even if they refer to very different situations, "colony" implies the localised ascendency of an external element — this is what brings the two meanings together). Settler colonialism as a concept encompasses this fundamental ambiguity. As its compounded designation suggests, it is inherently characterised by both traits. Since both the permanent movement and reproduction of communities and the dominance of an exogenous agency over an indigenous one are necessarily involved, settler-colonial phenomena are intimately related to both colonialism and migration. And yet, not all migrations are settler migrations and not all colonialisms are settler-colonial: … settler colonialism should be seen as structurally distinct from both."

> Veracini, "The Settler Colonial Situation"

Why is it that "not all migrations are settler migrations and not all colonialisms are settler colonial"? On the one hand, *migration* something distinct from the act of *settlement*. Whereas migration describes the natural phenomenon of movement across territory and geography, settlement implies an act of possession and dispossession in which territory and geography are improperly claimed as one's own. Moreover, if migration describes a shift in location, settlement describes the additional gesture of displacing and dehumanizing the inhabitants of a settled territory. Displacement and dehumanization are ways of justifying the settler's presence, and seek to craft the settler's identity as native to settled lands while removing the land rights of original, indigenous inhabitants.

arcGIS animation of the dispossession of Indigenous lands from 1784-1897. Credit to Cladio Saunt, author of *West of the Revolution: An Uncommon History of 1776*. Map animation drawn from https://tinyurl.com/495mexvw

On the other hand, "not all colonialisms are settler-colonial" because the act of *settlement* adds unique features to colonization, such as the settler-hero and a settler-mythology. Colonialism also takes a number of forms, as does the resistance to it. The sections below (on *post-colonialism, de-colonialism, anti-colonialism,* and *settler-colonialism*) describe different ways of thinking about colonialism and the resistance to it. In the United States especially, it has been convention to think of colonialism as a historical era or something which occurred in the distant past (e.g., "the *colonists* at Plymouth Rock," "*colonial* Williamsburg"). However, many if not most of the descriptions below imagine colonialism as an *ongoing* project that has changed forms over time.

Post-Colonialism

Post-colonialism often describes colonialism as a specific historical occurrence tied to the imperialist expansion of Western European nations and the United States. Colonialism, by this understanding, would encompass (for instance,) Spanish and British settlements in the Americas, the Atlantic slave trade commonly known as the Middle Passage, and European colonization of the Caribbean, the West Indies, Africa, and India. The prefix "post-" sometimes suggests that colonialism is *primarily* a historical phenomenon that occurred in the past. For that reason, activists, historians, and critics who identify with the "post-colonial" label are occasionally burdened by the assumption that they write from a point in time *after* colonization, as if it has already transpired and seek to take stock of its aftermath(s).

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* https://open.lib.umn.edu/rhetoricaltheory/?p=198#oembed-7

This is not, however, the only way that *post-colonialism* can be or has been defined. The "post-" prefix may also signal a "beyond" to colonialism. This acknowledges that the way colonialism manifests in our present-day goes "beyond" the forms it once took. *Post-colonialism* is necessary, in other words, because to describe the historical forms of colonialism is not sufficient to account for its evolution and influence. Rhetorical and post-colonial scholar Raka Shome defines *post-colonialism* in the following way in the essay "[Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An 'Other' View](#)":

> Postcolonialism is the "critical perspective that primarily seeks to expose the Eurocentrism and imperialism of Western discourses (both academic and public). . . ." (Raka Shome, "Postcolonial Interventions" p. 41)

In other words, if we now live at a point in time "after" or "beyond" colonialism, then *post-colonialism* seeks to capture the residue of colonialism that remains stuck to academic and public discourses. To read as a *post-colonial* critic means to pay attention to the way that so-called neutral or objective ways of describing contemporary life, politics, knowledge, industry, etc. are still steeped in a Eurocentric perspective and/or imperialist values. For instance, when classes in politics and philosophy only teach thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, and Hobbes, this betrays a *Eurocentric* bias insofar as it centers European philosophies that gained currency because of the colonial powers that elevated them. Alternatively, if we pay attention to the way that military culture is celebrated in popular culture – or how expensive and deadly military campaigns are justified in the name of America's exceptional democracy – this points to a i*mperialist* bias in which the continued strength of the American empire is supported through common, even ignorable, rhetorical forms.

One frequent (but incomplete) characterization of *post-colonialism* is that it is primarily an scholarly or academic way of understanding the consequences of colonialism. This is especially true of the way that *post-colonial* critique has been adopted and applied within literary studies, which maintains that the colonial destruction of culture is morally wrong, and that contemporary institutions' default preference for a Western canon of literature and philosophy contributes to this destruction. Often, this understanding of *post-colonialism* relies upon de-mystifying or de-bunking celebratory narratives of colonization. Such narratives are primarily designed to assure settlers and their descendants that colonization is justified while diverting attention to the generational traumas caused by this system.

Two prominent and important *post-colonial* critics who fit this description include Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Edward Said famously theorized [*Orientalism*](#), which refers to a fantasy of otherness projected by white and western cultures onto peoples and cultures considered "primitive" or "foreign," and which often have little

to no correspondence with reality. It refers to a patronizing attitude that essentializes societies as static and underdeveloped, enabling "Eastern" cultures to appear simultaneously exotic and threatening. By representing an "other" as feminine, weak, and vulnerable, Orientalism is a fictional lever that allows the Western "self" to imagine itself as masculine, rational, and strong. Gayatri Spivak is a critic of the deconstructionist tradition who most famously theorized the *subaltern,* or everything that (and everyone who) has limited or no access to the means of speech and/or representation, which are controlled by a system of cultural imperialism. Similar to the concept of the *proletariat,* the *subaltern* refers to a category of personhood that exists within a subordinated position within a cultural hierarchy, and whose speech cannot be heard because there are no channels to access it. These theorists enable us to ask questions like:

- Are there *any* popular forms of speech and representation that are not influenced by the history of colonization?
- Are most allegedly "objective" renderings of non-western cultures in the United States actually westernized fantasies about non-western cultures?
- For whom do we speak when we speak out against the lasting influence of colonization?
- How do we know that speaking "on behalf of" is not a form of colonial violence?

Decolonization and De-Coloniality

Decolonization refers to the program of undoing the historical harms wrought by colonialism, past and present. According to Walter Mignolo, there are two movements to *decolonization*: one of "unveiling" the damage done by colonial governance another "simultaneously affirming the modes and principles of knowledge that have been denied" (Mignolo, "DELINKING: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality, and the grammar of de-coloniality," p.457). *De-coloniality* is also interested in the future, insofar as it "means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal society over those that differ" (Mignolo, p.459). It is also different from post-colonial critique because it seeks to go beyond diagnosing the lingering traces of colonialism in contemporary speech, representation, and policy by engaging in specific, goal-directed actions. If post-colonialism is about diagnosing, de-bunking, and de-mystifying the assumption that colonization is just a thing of the past, then de-colonization asks what it is that can and must be done now in order to reverse continuing actions that perpetuate the colonial project, today.

> "the programmatic of de-coloniality moves away and beyond the post-colonial. … The de-colonial shift, in other words, is a project of de-linking while post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy." (Walter Mignolo, "DELINKING" p. 452)

One important way to understand *decolonization*'s orientation toward *doing* is by ensuring that the act of decolonizing refers to something specific, and not an abstraction. According to Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "decolonization is not a metaphor" because this term cannot be loosely applied. Instead, it must refer to

the repatriation of lands stolen from Indigenous peoples. For that reason, a syllabus or a classroom cannot be "decolonized" by adding readings written by Indigenous authors, much in the same way that a land acknowledgment does not "decolonize" but merely acknowledges the fact of colonization, that it has occurred. *Decolonization* requires an action, one that ensures that the lands that have been seized from peoples are restored to them. As Tuck and Yang write:

> "Decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice." (Tuck and Yang, "[Decolonization is not a Metaphor](#)," p.21)

In other words, *decolonization* cannot be a metaphor, nor can it be a metonym. It cannot be substituted to describe something other than the repatriation of lands; it is not a shorthand for social justice or institutional equity and inclusion practices. Most of all, decolonization is not *just* rhetoric in the sense of empty speech or flowery language. The point is that it *must* be literal.

However, this formula also teaches us something important about rhetoric because *colonization* can and does happen when people seize control of de-colonizal terminology in ways that dilute its meaning or claim it on behalf of the descendants of settlers who merely wish to assure themselves that they are doing the right thing. In other words, when people use the term *decolonization* inappropriately – that is, without having a concrete action attached that "takes into consideration Indigenous people(s) and the return of their land" (p.7) that rhetorical use language is an act of *colonization:* it takes a term of art designed to support the territorial and life-giving struggle of Indigenous people and co-opts it on behalf of colonization's historical benefactors.

Anti-Colonialism

Like *decolonization, anti-colonialism* is a position that seeks the available means of dismantling colonial systems and patterns of action. Tuck and Yang describe it as both a way of celebrating empowered, once-colonized subjects who seize denied once-denied privileges from the city, the state, and the nation. It is also a practice of "following stolen resources," keeping track of where and how they change hands among members of a settler class. One useful way of understanding *anti-colonialism* is by setting it alongside *post-colonialism*. As Robert J.C. Young argues,

> "Whereas **post-colonialism** has become associated with diaspora, transnational migration and internationalism, **anti-colonialism** is often identified exclusively, too exclusively, with a provincial nationalism." (Young, "[Colonialism and the Politics of Postcolonial Critique](#)")

In other words, if *post-colonialism* is a term associated with bringing to light the consequences of removing, dispersing, and re-settling peoples away from their homelands, then *anti-colonialism* is sometimes associated with the movements of colonized and formerly-colonized peoples to reclaim their homelands, which can take shape as a kind of national allegiance. For instance, rather than colonized French Algeria, *anti-colonization* might argue for a more Algerian Algeria, one that restores a homeland to the peoples dispossessed

of it. Young also calls *anti-colonialism* "a de-centered network" that exceeds national boundaries and unifies a large number of peoples in a common struggle against military occupation and western imperialism:

> [Anti-colonialism is] a complex constellation of situated local knowledges combined with radical, universal political principles, constructed and facilitated through international networks of party cells and organizations, and widespread political contacts between different revolutionary organizations that generated common practical information and material support as well as spreading radical political and intellectual ideas. (Young, "[Colonialism and the Politics of Postcolonial Critique](#)")

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Among the most famous cinematic depictions of this colonizer/colonized dynamic is the film *The Battle of Algiers*, which tells the story of colonial France's military incursion into Algeria and the resistance to it.

One example of an *anti-colonial* theorist is Frantz Fanon, who was an author, movement leader, and a practicing psychiatrist. Fanon devoted his life to treated peoples who were subjected colonization and the psychological effects of racism. In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Fanon argued that the dominant colonial culture identifies melanated skin with impurity, and spreads this false myth by scrupulously avoiding contact with people of different races. For instance, Fanon's concept of "[epidermalization](#)" maintained that "Black children raised within the racist cultural assumptions of the colonial system can partially resolve the tension between contempt for blackness and their own dark skins by coming to think of themselves, in some sense as white." (Fanon, "Foreword," p.ix) For that reason, colonization had material, physical, and psychological effects. The last of these took shape as existential dread and different kinds of neurosis. As a practitioner of psychiatry, Fanon's program of activist engagement took the form of treating people who were subjected to these effects of colonialism, finding lived and practical ways of resisting the forces imposed upon them on a routine, everyday basis.

Settler-Colonialism

The final form of colonialism reviewed here is *settler-colonialism. Settler-colonialism* is unique for the way that the settler plays a central role, writing themselves as a protagonist in the story of colonization. According to Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "settler-colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a home-making that insists on settler sovereignty over all the things in their new domain" (Tuck and Yang, "[Decolonization is not a Metaphor](#)," p. 5). It is not

a moment in history in the sense of something long past or even that is happening right now. Instead, it is a repeatable pattern that repeatedly organizes narratives, psychology, and a land-economy.

The focus of settler-colonialism upon narratives and psychology makes it similar to *anti-colonialism* in the sense that it engages both the psychological violence exacted by settler-colonists and the means of undoing or undermining it. Lorenzo Veracini argues that a key aspect of the settler-colonial situation is the way that it installs negative affects (i.e., bad feelings) in both colonizers and those people who they colonize. However, the settler's experience of these feelings is both a way of maintaining their own fictional innocence and establishing their own victimage. This is because a feature of the settler's psychology is that they imagine *themselves* as always at risk of being subjected to colonial violence:

> Indeed, ongoing concerns with existential threats and a paranoid fear of ultimate decolonisation can be seen as a consistent feature of the settler colonial situation. Besides Indigenous revenge, other neurosis-generating settler anxieties include paranoid fears about degenerative manifestations in the settler social body, apprehensions about the debilitating results of climate, remoteness, geopolitical position, racial contamination, demographic balances and concerns about the possibility that the land will ultimately turn against the settler project.
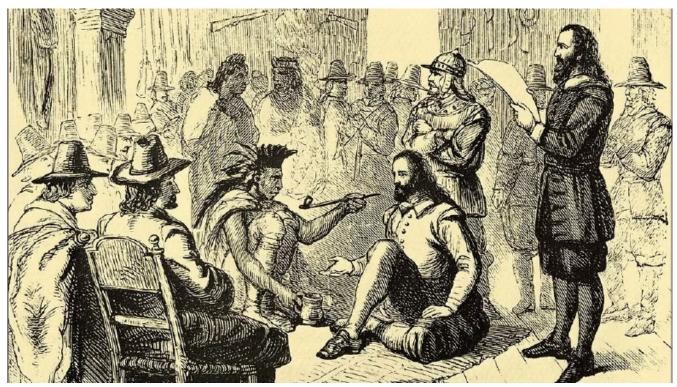
> In the settler colonial situation, therefore, disavowal is also directed at denying the very existence and persistence of Indigenous presences and claims. Sources frequently refer to Indigenous people as 'shadows', figures lurking in thickets, and the recurring construction of various mythologies portraying dying races should be refered to a specific settler need to finally disavow Indigenous presences. (Lorenzo Veracini, "[Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation](#)," p.368)

In other words, *settler colonialism* embraces and weaponizes the psychology of disavowal (or the "I know very well but nonetheless"). The settler and their descendants often "know very well" that they are historically the perpetrators of colonial violence. "Nonetheless" their anxieties about the decline of contemporary culture and its causes deflect this historical anxiety and the need to make right by endlessly posing the threat that the current form of settler culture will be overturned or destroyed – often *by* the very people that settler colonialism has displaced and dispossessed.

A key difference between *settler colonialism* and *post-colonialism, decolonization,* and *anti-colonization* is that it takes the form of a *structure.* How is this different from the other understandings introduced above?

- *Post-colonialism* often understands colonization as a historical phenomenon that has changed over time, with lingering and distant effects on the present-day.
- *Decolonization* refers to practices that carry the specific goal of repatriating lands to those peoples who have been historically dispossessed of them.
- *Anti-colonialism* refers to movements that seek to dismantle colonialism through strategic maneuvers and assertions of sovereignty on the part of peoples historically subjected to colonial governance.
- *Settler colonialism* is a structure in the sense that it is a whole framework of representation that seeks to re-shape and replace understandings of land and indigeneity through a character or persona called "the settler."

As Patrick Wolfe argues, *settler colonialism* is "a structure and not an event": it has consistent and repeatable formal features that recur across different time periods, each time taking on different characteristics, characters, narratives, and representations. As discussed above with the concept of the *settler hero,* the American settler-colonist in the 18th century who lands at Plymouth Rock is very different from the cowboy who settled American West. However, both concoct false stories about Indigenous peoples as submissive and subservient and at the same time, violent and dangerous.

One example of the false myth about Indigenous peoples that still circulates in the United States today is about Squanto (born Tisquantum) of the Patuxet, who "freely" helped English colonists to survive winters. However, the common telling of that story also erases the fact that before lending assistance to English colonists, The British enslaved Tisquantum, who was forced to travel to Spain and Britain, and eventually returned to their colonies. In the three years that he was gone, diseases brought to the Americas by colonists were estimated to have killed over 90% of the Tisquantum's tribal community. After his return, Tisquantum had little choice in serving as a go-between between Massasoit, who led the Wampanoag Confederation, and the British colonists.

Ultimately, *settler colonialism* is unique from the other categories of colonialism presented here, in other words, because of the way that it theorizes a specific and systematic transformation of Indigenous culture. This transformation consists in labeling objects and peoples as its 'own', and then codifies these relationships into law as enforceable through policing and state violence. Some of the features of this structural transformation include:

- Settler colonialism transforms land into property, restricting human relationships to land to that

between a land-owner and property.

- Settler colonialism restricts knowledge about land and cosmology, either destroying or (literally) burying them, causing a reversal of history.
- Settler colonialism seeks to make the settler "more native" than Indigenous peoples while erasing the genealogy of Indigenous peoples. It also produces the fictional narrative that the settler is at risk of being displaced or removed from their fictive "homelands".
- Settler colonialism seeks to make make the telling of Indigenous history impossible and less important than the settler's traditions and histories.
- Once a territory has been colonized and its resource economy has been extracted, settler-colonists blame Indigenous and (formerly) enslaved peoples for the damage done and seeks a new territory to colonize.

Having come full circle, this chapter opened with a discussion of what a "settler colonial situation" is, offered a reflection on the way that even the contemporary American university system is complicit in this situation, before finally discussing some variations upon scholarly and lived understandings of colonialism. Ultimately, colonialism is complex and sprawling phenomenon, one that is not simple to explain or capture, but which all-encompassing and everywhere, difficult to ignore once it enters your awareness.
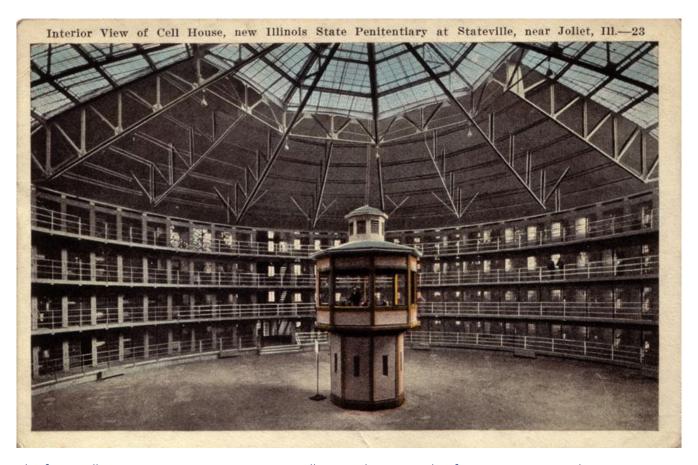
Secondary Readings

- Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Tabula Rasa* 38 (2021): 61-111.

Additional Resources

- Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Semiotic Conquest of America.* Graduate School of Tulane University, 1982.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality." *Cultural studies* 21.2-3 (2007): 449-514.

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CHAPTER 12: THE SECRECY SITUATION

The former Illinois State Penitentiary in Statesville, IL and an example of panoptic prison architecture

This chapter is about the **Secrecy Situation.** The first section defines this "situation," covers key terms related to secrecy rhetoric (e.g. *arcanum*, *secretum*, **surveillance**, and **sousveillance**), and considers how these concepts are relevant to the documentary "The Great Hack." The second section offers a short history of famous conspiracy theories and how they have been a recurring feature of western European and American history. The final section considers how rhetoric offers useful concepts for identifying and describing secrets. [*recording forthcoming*]

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: Secrecy Rhetoric (Video, ~20m)
- Part 2: Conspiracy Rhetoric (Video, ~TBA)
- Part 2: Rhetoric, Psychoanalysis, and Secrecy (Video, ~TBA)

Read this Next

- Stahl, Roger. "Weaponizing speech." *Quarterly journal of speech* 102.4 (2016): 376-395.

Part 1: Secrecy Rhetorics

Secrecy creates a "situation" in two ways.

On the one hand, secrecy is a *spectacle.* The term "spectacle" describes how a public's attention is steered from one scandal or emergency after another. The spectacle demands all of our attention but makes it impossible to focus upon just one thing that is happening. As Guy Debord writes, "With consummate skill, the spectacle organizes ignorance of what is about to happen and, immediately afterward, the forgetting [of what has happened]. The more important something is, the more that it is hidden." That's the logic of the spectacle: secrets keep us tuned in because there is always another revelation or scandal to grab our attention. Often, this resonates with how "rhetoric" is described in public life. Rhetoric is often understood as the medium for keeping and communicating secretly, using words and images to create the impression of absence, heighten suspense, and grab public attention.

On the other hand, secrecy creates rhetorical situations of coded communication. When a secret exists between two or more people, keeping the secret means communicating in public with purposeful double

meanings or by not communicating at all. When secrets are brought out into public, they separate members of an in-group from an out-group. Joshua Gunn describes the word "shibboleth," a famous secret password, as an example of this relationality in *Modern Occult Rhetoric:*

> the Ephraimites and the Gileadites are warring, and the latter defeats the former. The Gileadites fashion a blockade to catch fleeing Ephraimites and establish a password to let their friends through. Each escapee is asked to pronounce the word "shibboleth," ancient Hebrew for "ear of corn." In the dialect of the Gileadites the word was pronounced with a "sh," while the Ephraimites pronounced it with a "s."

The shibboleth is a secret password, a covert mode of communication used to constitute, separate, and police. Passwords and surveillance technologies serve a similar function today. By enlisting secrecy, communication forges social bonds and creates novel configurations of knowing and not knowing.

Linguistic Roots of Secrecy: Arcanum and Secretum

In sum, the secrecy situation is both

- a general curated, immersive, and addictive experience of culture by a public trained to expect secrecy at every turn and
- the particular relational experience – both intimate and oppressive – of holding privileged knowledge together with others.

The contemporary word "secret" is related to two terms developed in the Roman empire: *arcanum* and *secretum.* These describe distinct but related ways of thinking about secrecy, specifically the secrets that a ruling class or government keeps relative to a wider public. These forms of secrecy are *modes of political time management.*

- **Arcanum** comes from the noun *arca,* which means chest, coffin, or treasury. It is a secret that is not available because it has been buried, put under wraps, removed, or locked away from visibility or use. The defining characteristic of the arcanum is that its contents are inaccessible. As a mode of time management, the purpose of the *arcanum* is to control information *indefinitely*. The a*rcanum Imperii* is the secret of state. These kinds of secrets restrict the flow of information by walling it off and making it inaccessible.
- **Secretum** comes from the verb *secenere,* which means "to sift apart." It is a secret that arises due to the social separation between the suspicious and the ruling class who is 'supposed to know' some hidden truth. The defining characteristic of the secretum is that it is always part-in and part-out of public view. Some aspects of the secret drip into the public's awareness, while other aspects remain outside of it. As a mode of time management, the purpose of the *secretum* is to innoculate or propagandize by gradually

allowing the secret into the open. However, the secretum never comes out all at once. Instead, it maintains a balance between knowing the secret and knowing that we do not know it.

Subjective and Objective Secrets

Next, let's think about a different conceptual pairing that describes two very different kinds of rhetoric used to communicate information about secrets. These are *subjective* and *objective* secrets, offering a functional difference between kinds of secrets that demand different kinds of institutional response. What this means is that subjective and objective secrets must be protected differently and fit into different categories in terms of the kinds of information that they contain.

Subjective Secrets	EXAMPLES
• *Compact*, or expressed with brevity. • *Transparent*, or readily understandable. • *Changeable*, or can be revised. • *Perishable*, or short-term public memory.	"Loose Lips Sink Ships"

Let's start with **subjective secrets**, which contain four key features. Subjective secrets are *compact*, or expressed with brevity, *transparent*, or readily understandable, *changeable*, or can be revised, *perishable*, or live in short-term public memory.

During World War II, the temporary position of a ship or service persons would be a subjective secret. The secret is easy to understand, it is brief, temporary, and if necessary it can be changed. Another example is the World War two era phrase "loose lips sink ships". This phrase contains an argument that implies a civic obligation, shut up about your work if you want the nation to stay safe. It's reasonably easy for us to understand that even at the distance of 70-80 years when it first circulated. It is also easy to think up variants on this phrase such as "snitches get stitches" or "see something say something". Each communicates a message about secrecy for the moment in which it was shared in public.

Objective Secrets	Nuclear Fission
Diffuse, or expressed in many words. *Technical*, or unavailable to lay audiences. *Determinable* by individual deduction. - Eternal, or long-lasting public memory.	

Next, let's consider **objective secrets**. Objective secrets also have four key features, they are *diffuse* or expressed in many words, they are *technical*, or unavailable to lay audiences or audiences that do not have the required expertise, they are *determinable*, by individual deduction, and they are *eternal* or live in long-lasting public memory.

An example of an objective secret would be nuclear fission. Nuclear fission is the process of splitting the atom, this process is not an easy or simple thing to explain but requires many words. It is not easily understood by non-technical audiences, but someone who is sufficiently informed could in theory come up with these ideas on their own with enough research. Finally, fission never stops being dangerous. Like the existence of UFOs/UAPs, it is a long-term secret, kept because its potential effects do not dissipate over time.

Anamorphosis as Metaphor for the Secret

In **Chapter 9: Visual Rhetoric**, we covered the concept of anamorphosis as an example of *presence*. Anamorphosis describes a visual shift in perspective and a shift in what an observer knows. Historian Martin Jay tells us that, traditionally, anamorphosis describes a visual technique employed by painters that "allows the spectator to reform a distorted picture by use of a non-planar mirror." (48) The English language inherits anamorphosis from the Greek terms *ana* (again) and *morphe* (form). It conventionally refers to a painting technique for manipulating perspective through purposeful distortion. A famous example of anamorphosis is the Renaissance painting shown below, *The Ambassadors* (1533) painted by Hans Holbein the Younger.

Hans Holbein the Younger, "The Ambassadors" (1533)

Looking the painting head-on, there is one disproportionate element: the large and distorted shape that covers the lower half of the canvas. But from the proper angle, the distortion is revealed as a skull. The spectator can see it fully and upright only as they move away from the canvas's center. Head-on, the painting overflows with representations of knowledge. It is littered with mandolins, measuring devices, scrolls, and globes. 'Viewed at an angle,' however, the skull adds an extra element, one that carries an important significance for the viewer. The skull tells us that something was missing when we first glanced at the image. Anamorphosis describes the visual transformation of the skull, moving from an unintelligible blob to a recognizable form, once viewed

from the corrected perspective. The skull offers an analogy for the logic of secrecy: hidden meaning is only available when the audience to this painting shifts their perspective.

Anamorphosis need not be a visual phenomenon. There are many scenarios where secrets lie in plain sight, right in front of us, and it isn't until the audience's perspective shifts that we recognize ourselves as in the presence of a secret. In the clip below from the film *Searching*, the protagonist (played by John Cho) has recently lost his daughter. He's done everything in his power to find her using the resources of the police and has to the best of his ability scoured all of his daughter's social media postings. At the moment that he submits commemorative materials for his daughter's funeral, he notices something that he had not before: an anamorphic image that had been part of the social media profile that his daughter had been using, and which he had found after her disappearance.

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Example of anamorphosis from the (2018) film *Searching*.

In the first instance, the main character saw the stock photo image as insignificant, much as a viewer approaching the skull of *The Ambassadors* for the first time. There was no reason to question whether or not the person that his daughter had been chatting with was using their own authentic image. However, after coming to find out that the image is a stock photo, there is an anamorphic shift such that the meaning of these previous conversations changes. It suddenly becomes possible that his daughter was catfished, and it renews the main character's drive to find his missing child. Looking at the image from a different angle produces a different meaning. In the first instance, the character saw the image, not knowing what it meant. Then, anamorphosis occurs, changing the meaning of the image and changing the course of events in the film.

Whistleblowing, Leaking, and Stove-Piping

The term *secretum* describes how some secrets are "open," existing between what is known and what is unknown, separating information between those who rule and those who are ruled. The umbrella term *secretum* also captures how secret information trickles from an official source into the public. Three common terms describe this movement of secrecy: **whistleblowing**, **leaking**, and **stove-piping**. Each is defined below and paired with an extended example of how these terms work together:

- *Whistleblowing* is when a member of an organization circumvents or goes around the institutional hierarchy to reveal compromising information about wrongdoing. If you are working in a group if you

catch someone cheating on an exam and you report it to the instructor, that would be an example of whistleblowing. You circumvented the institutional hierarchy in some sense by going around your relationship with this other person in order to report it to the instructor. Because the secret is attributable to you because you revealed it to them, you would be the whistleblower.

- *Leaking* occurs when secret information is shared with a third party to preserve the anonymity of an original source. If you were to catch someone cheating on an exam then pass that information to another person in the class who then passes it on to the instructor, that would be leaking. That way you would have shared that information with a third party, this other friend, who would have then passed it along in order to keep your identity a secret.
- *Stove-piping* is when confidential information is released strategically to polarize public opinion. If you have a grudge against someone and then intentionally whistleblow or leak information that is false or incorrect to get them in trouble, that would be **stove-piping**. This term describes when information is labeled as a secret – likely with significant inaccuracies – to serve some personal or political goal.

Surveillance and Sousveillance

The last two key terms related to secrecy that we'll consider here are **surveillance** and **sousveillance**.

According to [Steve Mann, Jason Nolan, and Barry Wellman](), **surveillance** is the observation of interaction or behavior by a nonparticipant in the interaction. It can also be explained in terms of three functions.

- It is a form of social control or a way to encourage restrictions on behavior.
- It is a mode of capitalist participation or a way to harvest information for the purposes of individual, corporate, or partisan enrichment.
- Finally, it is a demand for disproportionate transparency from the subject under observation. In this case, information must be known for public safety or security, such as viral tracing data or essential national security information.

It's important to note that surveillance technologies have been with us for a long time, like other secrecy functions of government, it is embedded in the history of official government institutions like prisons. One of the famous prison building structures used for state surveillance is the panopticon. Before electricity or film, the panopticon created a system of visual surveillance within the prison. The idea of the panopticon is to exercise discipline through a visual arrangement of space, a guard in a central watchtower polices every cell and every cell may be seen at a moment's notice with minimal patrolling. It also encourages watching among the incarcerated, each of whom has a different limited window upon the other cells in the prison. It illustrates that surveillance is a function of government and, like "loose lips sink ships", that it is an ideology related to policing

that people freely adopt. The question is why do we feel obligated to surveil and who is disproportionately surveilled relative to others?

Sousveillance describes techniques of looking back. It is a mode of watching that turns surveillance technologies back on the watchers. When we think of transparency watchdogs, or people turning cameras back on scenes of police violence, this is sousveillance or the act of looking back. The image above is an installation called "inside/out" by the French artist JR. It depicts a large photographic mural that was sent on the ground along the Pakistani border and was meant to be captured by drones flown by Americans flying overhead. This look-back is intended to make the persons who are typically watched into watchers, reversing the conventional dynamics of state surveillance power.

Public Consciousness of Surveillance

Let's consider an example of how surveillance is represented and how the public is trained to understand it. As we stated before, surveillance is the observation of interaction or behavior by a nonparticipant in the interaction. It is also a form of social control, a mode of capitalist participation, and a demand for transparency on the part of citizens. In the late 1990's early 2000's, surveillance was figured as a powerful policing tool, and digital surveillance technology was still in early development. This trailer conveys the message that corrupt

institutions will misuse surveillance tools that are intended to protect people from violence. Let's watch the clip and consider its relation to the concept of surveillance.

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The film *Enemy of the State* tells the story of a district attorney, played by Will Smith, who accidentally comes upon a video of a political assassination in the United States. He is forced into hiding and is publicly scapegoated by the individuals played by Jack Black and Jon Voight, who plotted this assassination and who run a secretive government agency. Smith befriends a conspiracy theorist played by Gene Hackman, who enables him to avoid capture while attempting to clear his name.

Surveillance, the observation of one or more parties by another party not present in the communication exchange, is a major feature of the film. It also satisfies the three criteria of surveillance described above:

- Surveillance is depicted as a form of <u>social control</u> because Smith and Hackman are openly policed by a secretive agency that resembles the NSA.
- Smith participates in <u>capitalist surveillance</u> because he is most exposed when shopping with credit cards and on camera.
- The film ultimately demands <u>disproportionate transparency</u> by repeatedly exposing Smith to scrutiny and harm, despite his character's record of government service.

Ultimately, it makes the case in 1999 that someone must watch the watchers and that more *public* transparency would ensure that people in charge of our surveillance tools are not also corrupt. Surveillance makes our actions are more and more available for policing and raises the likelihood that surveillance systems will malfunction or fall into dangerous hands. The need to look back is therefore deeply urgent.

Weaponized Speech and the Information Bomb Metaphor

When organizations leak large amounts of information into the public about corrupt institutions in governments, the act of looking back becomes connected to demands for transparency. This idea of sousveillance of the look back is what brings us to Stahl's article which asks when and how does speech become weaponized? In his words, how can we speak about speech in an era of information warfare that has allowed notions of war and public communication to meld to a significant degree?

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Metaphor is the foundation for understanding Stahl's article, *Weaponizing Speech*. *Metaphor criticism* is the selection of a narrow vocabulary for events that are occurring in the world. It places A in terms of B where A is the tenor, the literal thing to which we refer, and B is the vehicle, the rhetorical screen that shapes how we see that literal object. In this case, we tend to see the tenor of speech through the vehicle of the weapon. As Stahl writes, a terrorist threat relies upon a transfer of meaning in which the state uses the sign as a tactic of information warfare. It communicates rhetorically, using metaphors. Stahl several examples of how the media has used metaphors in order to talk about terrorism.

> "Media coverage comprises the 'oxygen' of terrorism... likening terrorism to a living organism that disappears in a conflagration."

Here the vehicle is *oxygen* and the tenor is *media*. Media organizations are the literal thing to which coverage refers, while metaphorically, these act as the accelerant for terroristic activities because of the way that they circulate harmful messages.

> Stahl also argues that mass media depicts terrorism as "noise and untranslatability" because "a terrorist's speech cannot be speech."

In this case, *noise* is the vehicle used to convey the tenor of *terrorism*. Because the literal event of terrorism cannot be understood as meaningful within the military framing of events, it must be instead understood as a distortion.

The Information bomb stages a similar metaphor. In this case, the vehicle, *the I-bomb,* metaphorically conveys a literal object, *speech that reveals a state secret.*

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The metaphor of the information bomb circulated following the 2010 Wikileaks information releases, which initiated a wave of discourse fusing the frames of cyber-terrorism and weaponized journalism. The organization released enormous caches of military ground reports and diplomatic cables that exposed the mass

deaths of innocent civilians, the use of torture and assassination, and the general failure of the U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan. Perhaps more significant than the revelations themselves however was the fact that as one journalist put it, virtually all of Washington declared WikiLeaks' disclosures (e.g. of diplomatic cables) as acts of treason.

> The conversation routinely pushed the disclosures into the frame of war, weaponry, and terrorism. The loudest voice in the Republican party was that of New York congressman Peter King, incoming chair of the house committee on homeland security who demanded that Wikileaks be put on the official state department list of terrorist organizations. In addition to describing the leaks as catastrophic and sabotaging our system, King made sure to characterize the information in weaponized terms. "They are providing the weapons to terrorist organizations giving them information which they can use to kill off Americans to compromise America's standing around the world. The time bombs are out there and they are going to go off and by then it is going to be too late."

The information bomb (or I-Bomb) is a metaphor for an allegedly dangerous information release. It exposes a secret by disclosing information as if it were a weapon, a bomb that explodes with unpredictable effects. It is, as Stahl describes it, *weaponized speech*, a metaphor in which spoken, written, or otherwise recorded information takes on the characteristics of a hypothetically destructive force or warlike threat. Sometimes, *weaponized speech* is a form of propaganda designed to create the impression or perception of a threat, encouraging a heightened military or police response while minimizing uncertainty over whether the anticipated, destructive effects will actually materialize.

Next, let's consider a clip that illustrates a different instance of the I-bomb than is considered within Stahl's article. The video below is a trailer for the Netflix documentary *The Great Hack*. Like Stahl's article, the film is concerned with the weaponization of information.

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The Great Hack offers an example of the I-bomb because it is also seeking to describe a strategic use of speech and language that is weapon-like in nature. *The Great Hack* also offers an example of surveillance: Cambridge Analytica fostered social control of public opinion enabled by a profit motive. Finally, *The Great Hack* it created a demand for transparency in the form of the documentary 'look back.' From a later point in time, we as an audience are invited to see the secrets that were once exposed and the destructive effects they had.

Concluding image of "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark"

Are secrets permanent and enduring and are specific measures needed in order to protect that kind of secret or, are they temporary and changeable? Ultimately, secrets are ways of accounting for how information moves into the public. Secrecy isn't just an arcanum, locked away like the arc of the Covenant at the end of *Indiana Jones*. It is a mode of strategic time- and information management that establishes a concrete relationship between those presumed to be "in the know" and the public who is supposed to believe in these institutions. It stages the relationship between rulers and the ruled, or in the case of *The Great Hack,* between corporations and consumers.

Part 2: Conspiracy Rhetoric

One of the reasons to study the rhetoric of secrecy is that it helps us to understand the logic of *conspiracy theories*. Conspiracy theories are common ways of creating a spectacle of secrecy in public and personal communication. They also describe how secrets acquire a specific kind of performative force when they circulate in public. Conspiracy theories use rhetoric to attract audiences and capture them within a web of faulty reasoning.

Although it may seem like conspiracy theories are especially prevalent today, they have a long history in the United States. This section offers a short history of conspiracies, offering some context for how and why conspiracy thinking has been part of America's common sense for the past two centuries.

Legal and Rhetorical Definitions of Conspiracy

According to the United States federal legal code, a *criminal conspiracy* is an agreement by two or more people to commit criminal fraud through illegal actions. Importantly, the plan to commit conspiracy does not have to be conducted in secret to be punishable by law – conspiracies can and do happen out in the open. The *Mueller Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election* cites two conspiracy statutes in discussing whether to bring charges to Donald J. Trump for election interference involving the Russian government and WikiLeaks in 2016. One of these, 18 U.S.C. § 371, creates an offense ...

> ... "[i]f two or more persons conspire either to commit any offense against the United States, or to defraud the United States, or any agency thereof in any manner or for any purpose."

As a kind of rhetoric, *conspiracy theories* are a repetitious form of disinformation that produces a paranoid mindset in an audience. For example, Peter Knight describes post 9/11 "outrageous conspiracy theories" as an "infinite regress of suspicion" in which "the location of the ultimate foundation of power is endlessly deferred." (193) Many conspiracy theories resemble a "slippery slope" fallacy of reasoning in which secret information is presented as an unfolding pattern of exposure. Richard Hofstadter calls a common rhetorical organization of conspiracy theories in the 20th century "the paranoid style":

> The typical procedure [of the paranoid style] is to start with defensible assumptions and with a careful accumulation of facts, or at least of what appear to be facts, and to marshal these facts toward an overwhelming "proof" of the criminal conspiracy. It is nothing if not coherent – in fact, the paranoid mentality is far more coherent than the real world, since it leaves no room for mistakes, failures, or ambiguities. It believes that it is up against an enemy who is as infallibly rational as he is totally evil, and it seeks to match his imputed total competence with its own, leaving nothing unexplained and comprehending all of reality in one overarching, consistent theory.

It's this "mentality" that Hofstadter identifies in the late 1950s, and which he argues has emerged out of major events in the past two centuries. These 'events' include the anti-masonic movement, the rise of evangelical and political demagogues in the United States, and the mainstreaming of Joseph McCarthy, Robert Welch, and the anti-communist John Birch Society.

The Anti-Masonic Movement (early 19th century)

The Freemasons are a secret society with a long medieval and European history. They are commonly associated with secrets because of the use of esoteric symbols, rituals, and hierarchy. Although their social and political significance has declined substantially over time, they still remain commonly associated with secrecy and conspiracy theories.

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In the United States, the Freemasons were influential in the 18th and 19th centuries. Their activities were only partly secret because the fact of their hidden activities was public knowledge, particularly with the anti-Masonic movement. According to rhetorical and social movement theorist Leland Griffin, this movement emerged in the early 1800s. Here is how Griffin sets up the context for the fraternity of freemasons in the early 19th century:

> "The conflict between secrecy and democracy would appear to be a recurrent phenomenon in our national history. Indeed, since the flowering of the modern secret society in the eighteenth century, anti-secretism as a state of mind has been an enduring fiber in the pattern of Western culture. In countries where the totalitarian climate prevails, the spirit of anti-secretism readily suppresses the secret order by the application of brute force. Where the question of suppression is left to the arbitrament of public opinion, however, the spirit of anti-secretism relies on persuasion. Throughout the century following the Revolutionary War, sentiment against the secret society was strong in America. During this period three attempts to arouse Public Opinion to the destruction of secret societies – and the Masonic Society in particular – may be noted. The second of these movements, which flourished from 1826 to 1838, roughly spanning the Jacksonian period, was by far the most noteworthy of the three." (145-146)

We might note the following three points about this long passage:

1. Griffin, who is writing in 1958, has no better word than "anti-secretism" to describe the counter-movement to the freemasons, which refers fundamentally to a movement-like injunction for the masons to disclose their secrets to the public. In fact, the word "transparency" is a recent addition to our political, legal, and public vocabulary. As recently as the 1960s, politicians, and academics referred to "disclosure" instead of "transparency" as an important feature of a healthy political sphere.
2. The Masons are a significant group at the start of the 19th century, and that they dwindled in stature over time thanks to the efforts of a counter-movement of "anti-masons."
3. Anti-secretism "relies upon persuasion" and is therefore rhetorical. As Griffin notes, "the most significant figure in the band of aggressor rhetoricians was the political orator." (152)

In the fall of 1826, a rumor was circulated among Freemasons of western New York. Allegedly, a former member of the lodge at Batavia, a bricklayer named William Morgan, was planning to publish the secret signs, grips, passwords, and ritual of Ancient Craft [Blue Lodge] Masonry. Morgan was imprisoned on a false charge and abducted from his cell by a small band of Masons. He was then taken to an abandoned fort above Niagara Falls. Shortly thereafter, all historical trace of him vanishes. Morgan's disappearance triggered a public

backlash in many states which Griffin describes as the "anti-Masonic movement," which sought to expose the Freemasons as a not-so-secret criminal conspiracy.

When attacking the Freemasons, the anti-Masons relied upon "a 'fund' of public argument via various channels of media circulation, such as newspapers, tracts, public lectures, and sermons. In response, the Freemasons used rhetorical strategies that fell into two categories:

- The first strategy the Freemasons used was to counter-attack "the character and motives of Anti-masons. This strategy was a disaster. Griffin argues that it led the anti-Masons to extend their agenda to the complete destruction of Freemasonry itself, and later, "the destruction of all secret orders then existing in the country."
- The Freemasons' second rhetorical response … [was] "'dignified silence' in the face of the opposition's attack." According to Griffin, "states began to pass laws against extra-juridical oaths. Lodge charters were surrendered, sometimes under legal compulsion but often voluntarily, Phi Beta Kappa abandoned its oaths of secrecy, Masonic and Odd Fellows' lodges began to file bankruptcy petitions, and membership rolls in the various orders began to dwindle to the vanishing point."

Ultimately, the anti-Masonic movement disappeared, but the Freemasons remained. They have persisted through the late 20th and early 21st century, although their membership and public influence have diminished significantly. According to Joshua Gunn, the Freemasons were once a powerful organization because they laid claim to an "inexhaustible secret." The community was sustained through the secrecy enmeshed with the organization's hierarchy, its sacred rituals, and its guarded texts. But in the 20th century, in a flawed effort to get more members into the organization, the Freemasons began publicizing these texts. In this case, secrecy held that organization together and transparency pulled it apart. To sustain a public, the inexhaustible secret requires "a continuous dynamic obligation and commitment, achieved by a fetishized object whose information, meaning, or symbolism can never be fully revealed." By giving up on secrets, the Masons also 'gave up' on what bound them together.

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The Dreyfus Affair (late 19th – early 20th century)

The second example of early-20th century conspiracy theories is *the Esterhazy Scandal,* more commonly

known as *the Dreyfus Affair.* On July 24th, 1894, Major Esterhazy, a French officer, offered to sell important French military secrets to the German military attache in Paris, Lieutenant Colonel Maximilian von Schwartzkoppen. Esterhazy gave him an artillery manual and a memorandum he had written on the subject of the new short 120 millimeter cannon being developed by the French, French troop positions and modifications in the battle order of artillery units, and plans for the imminent invasion and colonization of Madagascar. Shortly after it was received by the German attache, this information was leaked back to the French through planted French spies at the German embassy. After making incorrect deductions about where the information could have come from, a Lieutenant Colonel in the French army created a list of artillery officer trainees. The name "Alfred Dreyfus" was quickly singled out.

Portrait of Alfred Dreyfus

Dreyfus was a Jewish artillery officer. Those above him in the chain of command were openly anti-Semitic and Dreyfus was the only Jewish trainee. When news of his arrest was leaked, it was explained that Dreyfus had just finished training in the general staff, which is why he could obtain so much information. The evidence that resulted in his conviction was also markedly racist: it made Dreyfus the subject of suspicion because he was Jewish. Even Dreyfus's handwriting did not match the handwriting on the leaked document from Germany. He was imprisoned on devil's island in French Guiana where he spent about five years. Widely publicized around the world, the Dreyfus arrest strongly intensified antisemitic attitudes in France and Europe. The word "Dreyfusard," a supporter of Dreyfus's innocence, would have a familiar reference to the scandal in the early 20th century. Some famous supporters of Dreyfus included Queen Victoria, Henri Poincare, Mark Twain, and the Pope.

While he was in prison Dreyfus naively believed in the army's ability to establish his innocence. He was unaware of the efforts to free him, his enemies in the general staff, and was convinced that high-ranking military officials were making efforts to find the real traitor. In 1896 new evidence emerged that identified the real culprit as Ferdinand Esterhazy. When officials suppressed the new evidence, a military court unanimously acquitted Esterhazy after a trial that lasted only two days. The army put additional charges against Dreyfus, which were based on forged documents. During this time, French novelist, playwright, and journalist Emile Zola published six open letters on Dreyfus's behalf. In 1898 he published the famous letter titled "Je Accuse!," – which was itself followed by seven more letters. This public pressure on the government to return to the case.

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In 1899 Dreyfus returned to France for another trial. The new trial resulted in another conviction and a 10-year sentence, but Dreyfus was pardoned and released. In 1906 Dreyfus was exonerated and reinstated as a major. He served during the whole of World War I. He ended his service at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and died in 1935.

The case is instructive for the way it communicates the role of racist ideologies in conspiracy theories. Max Horkheimer, who wrote "The Authoritarian Personality" in the wake of World War II, sought to establish a social-scientific basis for measuring and identifying the core traits of the anti-Semitic ideologies.

The Authoritarian Personality (1950) "seeks to discover correlations between ideology and sociological factors operating in the individual's past." It is about "hitherto largely ignored psychological aspects of fascism" by focusing "upon the consumer, the individual for whom the propaganda is designed." It aims "to discover

what patterns of socioeconomic factors are associated with receptivity, and with resistance, to antidemocratic propaganda."

Horkheimer finds that antisemitism is characterized by contradictory attitudes that cannot be easily reconciled. For example, anti-Semitic ideology made Dreyfus out to be both too strong and too weak, too secretive and also too intrusive, as assimilating both too much and not enough. Dreyfus was accused on the basis of having fabricated his own handwriting. It was the contradictions of his character that were the telltale evidence that led him to be imprisoned. Dreyfus's story is a warning because it was such a widespread source of misinformation. It also demonstrated how both racism and conspiracy theories were intertwined at the outset of the 20th century.

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Part 3: Psychoanalysis and Secrecy

When we learn a secret, we receive a very specific kind of knowledge, one that is somewhere between staying unknown and becoming known. Secrets stay unknown because they concentrate knowledge among a limited number of people, restricting who is "in the know" to limit the flow of information. However, secrets also characteristically leak out of closed groups. It is difficult to keep a secret because it is not always apparent what or how we will unconsciously communicate what we wish to hide. Freudian slips and accidental references often give the secret away.

What is Psychoanalysis?

Psychoanalysis is the study of *the unconscious* and is most often associated with the theory and practice of *talk therapy*: a patient speaks their symptoms aloud, which an analyst interprets. In the Freudian tradition, the unconscious is often thought of as repressed memories or thoughts that have been pushed out of the conscious mind but which return with a vengeance, haunting our everyday lives. This is one of the ways that psychoanalysis theorizes the secret: as a quantity that we know in our unconscious, but which is not present to the conscious mind.

Later traditions of psychoanalytic thinking resist the idea that the unconscious is deeply repressed "inside" of the patient. Instead, secrets live "on the outside," in everyday speech and our own under-noticed behaviors.

This "outside" unconscious emerges as language choices and the metaphors we use, as well as the automatic assumptions we make of others and ourselves. We carry our history in the way we carry ourselves in the world and project a learned, more-or-less functional worldview.

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On the philosophy and practice of *psychoanalysis* as the talking cure.

A key weakness of psychoanalytic thinking is that it sometimes emphasizes *individual, ideational* explanations above *collective, structural* explanations. For example, a psychoanalyst may point to a patient's psychology or their need to reframe a situation before granting that deeper causes like structural racism and income inequality are important contributing factors to their emotional distress. For this reason, a more responsible version of psychoanalysis must seek a wider frame that is both individual and collective; both ideational and material.

Finally, speech (or talk) is the key point of overlap between psychoanalysis and rhetoric. Like rhetoric, psychoanalysis credits speech with the power to transform a person's ideations – for better and for worse. Talk therapy allows some patients to recognize their symptoms as real secrets that they have kept from themselves, rather than dismissing or ignoring them. Talk cultivates awareness. For that reason, psychoanalysis is about knowing, anticipating, and building habits. It allows us to grow bigger around our secrets by giving them oxygen and making space for them in our lives.

Secrets are Rhetorical Repetitions

Rhetoric is also about speech and talk, adding the element of *repetition*. Before the word rhetoric was invented, a close equivalent was *poetry,* which was spoken aloud and remembered through repetition and meter. When the Greek sophists practiced persuasion, they departed from the oral performance of poetry that often reported important events. Instead, their rhetoric made speech an event. Frequently, they repeated especially compelling speeches and arguments, binding the invention of rhetoric to a kind of repetition. Even when understood as "figures of speech," rhetoric is often an organized form of repetition:

- **Anaphora** repeats the sounds at the beginning of words.
  A *s*imilar *s*equence of *s*ounds and *p*ersuasive *p*ropaganda are instances of anaphora.
- **Asyndeton** is the repeated omission of conjunctions between clauses, resulting in a hurried rhythm or

vehement effect. *Vini. Vidi. Vici.* (*I came. I saw. I conquered*)

- **Epiphora** repeats words positioned at the end of a sentence. I want *pizza*, he wants *pizza*, we all want *pizza*!

Secrets are also recognizable because they are forms of repetition. We may know a secret is kept when a conspicuous action rises to the level of a pattern. For example, we may know that someone is planning a surprise party if they repeatedly divert from the topic each time a birthday is brought up. Often "twist" endings rely on us repeating the past, seeing new significance in details that seemed mundane at first. When we read for repetition, we also read rhetorically because we seek to understand under-noticed patterns that are part of our everyday life.

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In the above clip, the character Michael Scott is terrible at keeping secrets, and threatens to disclose sensitive information through his repetitious behaviors. Jim struggles to prevent his secret from coming out while Michael repeatedly drops hints that reference Jim's secret (e.g. "the P situation," "he is in love with one of his co-workers who is engaged"). Indeed, he is so bad at keeping secrets that he eventually transforms into Jim, seeking to "repeat" him perfectly. These instances of repetition are what add up to a secret, making it increasingly apparent to all of those who are 'out of the know' that something has been hidden from them.

Those who are *Supposed to Know* and others who are *Supposed to Believe*

Like rhetoric, secrets have several different types of audiences. They are the "subjects supposed to know" and the "subjects supposed to believe." Whereas the "subjects supposed to believe" are those who know that the secret exists by virtue of some other, higher authority, the "subjects supposed to know" are those who are presumed to have access to the secret.

Publicly known secrets are often described as "open." Open secrets are those that are not fully or officially acknowledged but are nonetheless known and believed by a public who knows them to be true. Scandals are often open secrets before they become common knowledge. Other times, conspiracy theories try to create the appearance of an open secret by alleging that something is hidden when, in fact, there is no secret there at all. All secrets, open or otherwise, create a division between those who are "supposed to know" and those who are "supposed to believe."

- Those who are "**supposed to know**" are the keepers of the secret. For many people, it is an aspirational position or one that they revere. Other people imagine themselves as the "supposed to know" as a fantasy of mastery. The subject supposed to know is the star of outlandish conspiracy theories, assumed to be authorities with access, power, and privilege. The subject "supposed to know" is supposed to know "the truth" about something utterly secret to us, whether it be about extraterrestrial life, a highly specialized form of knowledge, or a family recipe. In the traditional psychoanalytic setting, the *therapist* is often depicted as the subject "supposed to know," or who is supposed to have the faculty of seeing what the patient cannot.

- Those who are "**supposed to believe**" are those who perceive themselves to be out-of-the-know, or who do not have the secret. They may be aware that a secret exists, and if so, they are meant to believe that some people in the first group (those "supposed to know") have access to it (even if they do not). Those "supposed to believe" are certain about one thing: *they know that they do not know*, and therefore invest in the "subject supposed to believe" as the likely source of all the answers. In the traditional psychoanalytic setting, the *patient* is often depicted as the "subject supposed to believe," or who is supposed to desire access to the secrets guarded by the subject "supposed to know."

Ultimately, secrets are sustained by the belief of those people who are "supposed to believe" in the other group, who is "supposed to know." Even if we do not have all of the answers, secrets are sustained by the belief that some other authority [e.g. a parent, professor, therapist, political representative, etc.] surely does have all the answers. In psychoanalytic theory, these "subjects supposed to know" are instances of *the superego* or *the big Other,* a psychological position from which we judge our own actions and which authorize our own judgment as accurate, moral, or legitimate.

Ego, Id, Superego

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The Freud Museum on the *Ego, Id,* and *Superego*

The concept of the *superego* is part of a famous triad that includes the *ego* and the *id*. This framework is meant as a way to understand how the unconscious operates as a negotiation between different elements of an individual's *psyche*. The following taxonomy is from the Freud Museum in London, with textbook commentary in the brackets:

- The *id* is the realm of appetites, wants, and passions that do not take 'no' for an answer. [This can also be thought of as the '*need to know'* of the secret in the sense of a demand that it be let out or be released.]
- The *superego* is connected to morality and social norms, built out of identifications with one's parents [and other *big Others*] , and can be extremely cruel. [This can also be thought of as the imagined position of those who are '*supposed to know,*' the secret and are presumed to restrict our access to it.]
- The *ego* faces the task of finding a balance between the demands of the id and the superego. That's why the ego is the seat of the 'defense mechanisms' – there are so many dangers to avoid! [The ego describes the negotiation between the subject's '*need to know*' and their imagination of those '*supposed to know,*' and all of the problems that arise because of it.]

Secrets = Knowledge Organized by Rhetoric

There are many official methods for "reading" secrets that seem to fall outside of the disciplinary boundaries of rhetoric, if only because of the way that they make secrets into a *mathematical* problem. One famous example is *the prisoner's dilemma*, a hypothetical problem about the probability of two (or more) conspirators reporting their companion(s) – revealing the secret of the conspiracy – under interrogation. The prisoner's dilemma has been used to map the probable behavior of <u>wartime combatants</u>, <u>economic competitors</u>, and <u>diplomacy among nations</u>. However, as the video below explains, although these models may calculate statistically reasonable outcomes actual or real-world results do not always correlate with these mathematical probabilities.

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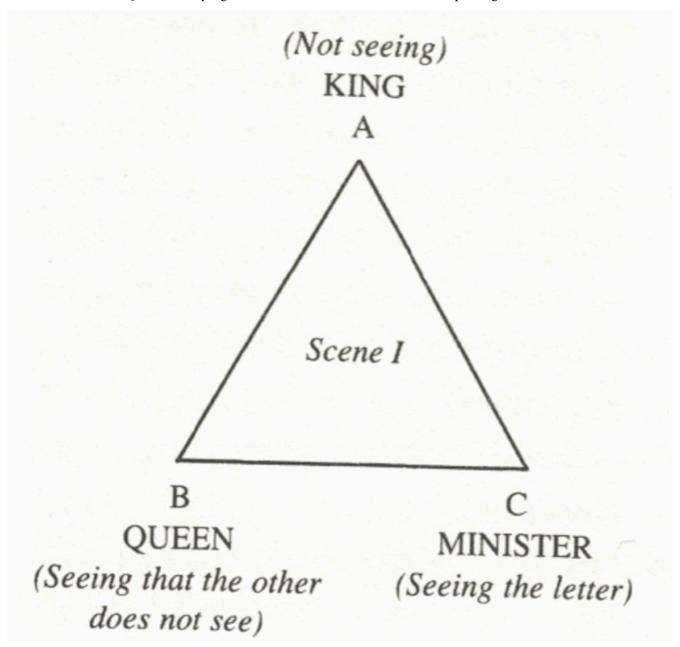
Psychoanalysis and rhetoric can also help us to understand the organized features of secrets, showing us *formal* characteristics that may not be apparent to us at first glance. One example is Edgar Alan Poe's short story, "<u>The Purloined Letter,</u>" which is one of the first examples of detective fiction.

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A YouTube video explaining the plot of "The Purloined Letter" in greater detail.
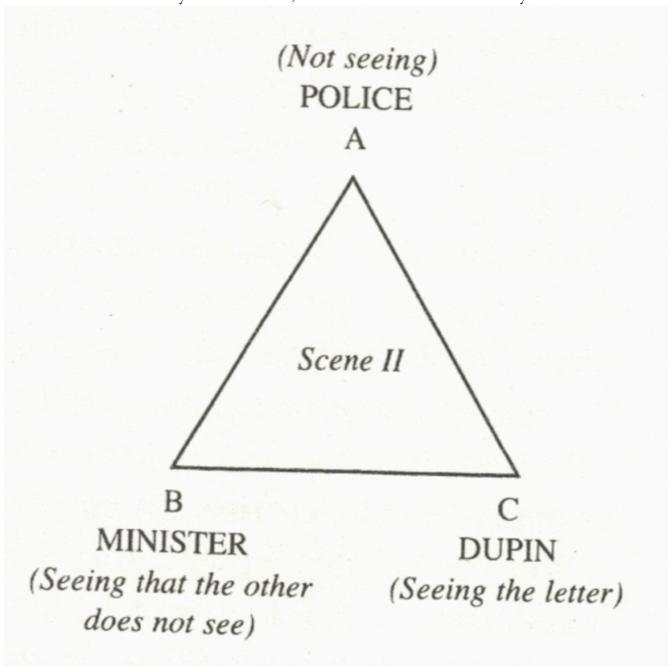
The story starts when a police officer, representing the Queen, bursts into the office of Auguste Dupin, a private investigator. This representative explains that the Queen has had a secret letter stolen. The theft occurred in a "royal boudoir," where the King was also present. The contents of the letter are so sensitive that the Queen had wished to keep it secret even from the King. However, the crafty minister D- entered the royal chambers, saw the Queen was trying to hide the document, and took it, replacing it with a fake.

The arrangement of characters in the first scene of The Purloined Letter

This is where the police get involved: they have staked out the Minister and have been unable to locate the letter, despite using state-of-the-art technology. Believing that Dupin will have better luck, the police task

him with finding the letter. Dupin visits the Minister D- for a social call, and very quickly spots the letter: it is crumpled up on the Minister's mantlepiece, laying in plain sight. He purposefully forgets an item at the Minister's apartment and returns the next day. While Dupin is in the apartment, he stages a diversion in the square below and – while the Minister's back is turned, replaces the stolen letter with a decoy of his own. The secret letter thus returns safely to its destination, and the reader never learns what it says.

(Not seeing)
POLICE
A

Scene II

B
MINISTER
(Seeing that the other does not see)
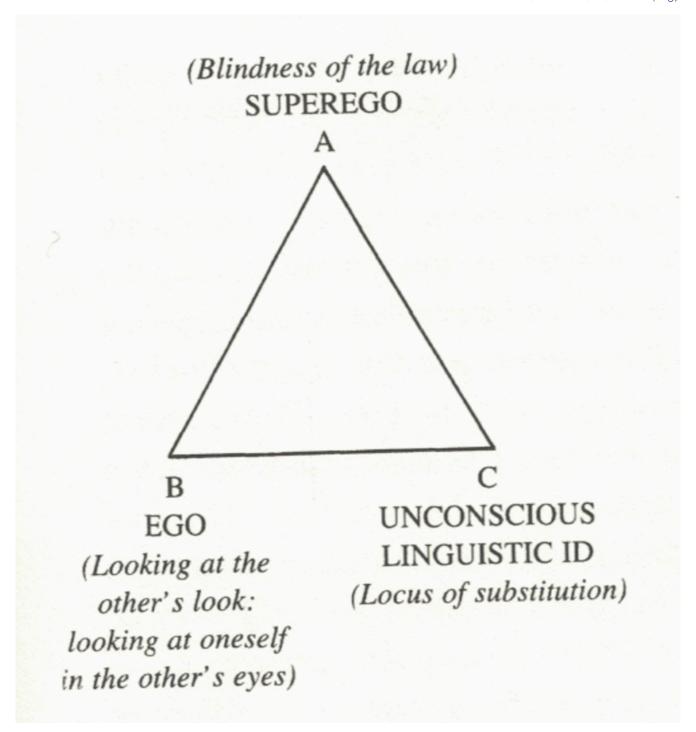
C
DUPIN
(Seeing the letter)

Reading "The Purloined Letter" rhetorically illustrates how there is an organization and form to the secret at the story's center. The story is partitioned into two scenes where the letter is "purloined" among three different characters. The first 'scene' occurs in the boudoir between the King, the Queen, and the Minister D-. The second occurs in the Minister's apartment, between the police, Minister D-, and Dupin. By breaking the story

down in this way, we can see that the secret is composed of three different "perspectives" or "points of view" with respect to undisclosed information:

1. The **first position** is that of the King and the police: they are "dupes" who are entirely ignorant of the letter's concealment. They represent the force of the superego, the laws that we impose upon ourselves, which is both all-powerful and disconnected from that which it sets out to govern. The letter is so secret that it does not even occur to them that it exists, or if they are aware that it exists, they are unable to see it when it is laying in plain sight.
2. The **second position** is that of the Queen in the first scene and the Minister D- in the second. They are the "keepers" of the secret, the ones who possess the privileged information and make every effort to conceal it and keep it out of wider view. They represent the ego, the conscious self who is divided between obedience to the law and unrepressed instincts of the id.
3. The **third position** is that of Minister D- in the first scene and Dupin in the second. They are the "perceivers" of the secret, the ones who are able to recognize what the second position is trying to conceal and, seizing the advantage, shift a balance of power. They represent the instincts and agency of the id, which captures how urges related to the body's physical functions (e.g. seeing, eating) become automatic behaviors.

(Blindness of the law)
SUPEREGO
A

B
EGO
*(Looking at the
other's look:
looking at oneself
in the other's eyes)*

C
UNCONSCIOUS
LINGUISTIC ID
(Locus of substitution)

Most often, secrets are thought of as "hidden content," in the sense that we want or need to know what those in positions of power or privilege have concealed from us. The story shows us how secrets are not hidden content, but a form or structure. For one thing, at no point do we ever learn what is *in* the purloined letter. Instead, we learn how and among whom the letter moves, and how the structure of not knowing, knowing, and seizing upon the secret may continually reproduce itself.

Ultimately, rhetoric and secrets are connected in several ways. Deciphering "talk" may allow us to perceive those things others have hidden – and which we keep hidden from ourselves. Identifying the "superego" may

enable us to name the authorities in our lives or those who "have the secret." Finally, the formal features of narrative unmask secrets as nothing more than positions we take with respect to privileged information: not having it, having it, or of unbalancing these power dynamics.

Additional Resources

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CHAPTER 14: THE DIGITAL SITUATION

The content of all new media is old media.

This chapter completes the unit on rhetoric's "situations" by discussing the digital situation of rhetorical communication. It is divided into three sections: The first discusses *what the Digital Situation is.* The second defines two *keywords, "algorithm"* and *"big data."* The final section, on *digital dystopia* and *algorithms of oppression,* describes how rhetoric helps us to understand the problems generated by profit-focused digital technologies/platforms. There are two videos that accompany the third section that I also strongly recommend.

To allay any confusion, *there is no chapter 13 in the un-textbook.* Much like the floors of some buildings, the chapters skip from chapter 12 (on "the secrecy situation") to chapter 14 (on "the digital situation"). My (admittedly superstitious) reasoning for this otherwise puzzling decision is that I would just prefer not to end this textbook on a '13'.

Watching the video clips embedded in the chapters may add to the projected "read time" listed in the headers. Please also note that the audio recording for this chapter covers the same tested content as is presented in the chapter below.

Chapter Recordings

- Part 1: <u>What is Digital Rhetoric?</u> (TBA)
- Part 2: <u>Keywords for the Digital Situation</u> (TBA)
- Part 3: <u>Digital Dystopia</u> and the <u>Algorithms of Oppression</u> (Video, ~35m)

Read this Next

- Woods, Heather Suzanne. "<u>Asking more of Siri and Alexa: feminine persona in service of surveillance capitalism</u>." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 35.4 (2018): 334-349.

Part 1: Defining Digital Rhetoric

Digital Rhetoric describes the language we use and the practices that have become invisible/normal concerning technology. The basic premise is that the words and techniques we use to monitor and model human behavior have consequences. This chapter answers the questions: which words, phrases, and language choices define the "digital situation" of rhetoric? What techniques or strategies are part of the digital situation? What are its practical and lived effects?

Beyond offering this core definition and answering the questions above, this chapter explains how digital rhetoric also describes the way that words about technology and techniques of measurement are used to model human behavior, the way that digital technologies retain the trace of earlier communication technologies, and the destructive effects of the terminology used to categorize technology and digitally-enabled measurement techniques.

What is the "Digital Situation"?

The "digital situation" describes the effort to situate the theories and methods of rhetoric to the new environment of digital communication. According to rhetorical scholars Damien Smith Pfister and Michelle Kennerly,

> The invention of writing, like the invention of print and digital media after it, did not signal the end of oral communication, though it did transform oral norms and many of the practices that accompanied oral culture. However, even in digital contexts, oral communication merits continued attention because, as the scholar of media and rhetoric Marshall McLuhan famously claimed, "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph.

The digital era also corresponds with the invention of computational technologies, operating systems, and internet-enabled connectivity is often described as a wholly new historical situation, one that marks an important departure from previous technological ages. The beginning of this "situation" is often located somewhere between the 19th-century invention of difference and analytical engines and the 20th-century development of computerized cryptography, and features western European inventors such as Ada Lovelace, Charles Babbage, and Alan Turing. However, many early computational technologies retain the trace of older technologies. Some, like the analytical engine, were powered by steam, while others, like the Turing machine, are no more complicated than a basic calculator. Additionally, the word "computer" originally described a class of professional mathematicians, like Dorothy Vaughan, whose work was crucial for space travel in the 20th-century. Practitioners like Vaughan, who were subjected to vicious discrimination and have been long overlooked in the history of the digital age, offer a window into how allegedly "new" forms of media retain older forms of technology and the cultural assumptions that surrounded them.

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In the case of the digital era, many 'new' technologies have strong resemblances to their older antecedents and the discriminatory patterns of thought that characterized them have not disappeared but instead, have changed forms. For example, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, which is one of the few ancient Greek works in the philosophical tradition that references the term *rhetoric,* he describes an ancient skepticism to a different form of technology: writing. In that dialogue, the character-teacher Socrates argues that *speech* is superior to *writing* because it captures the living intentions of the speaker and the liveliness of the spoken encounter. Writing confines

the communication of knowledge to the dead letter, where it is mummified and separated from its original source. When such sources are absent, they cannot resolve the conflicts over interpretation, misuse, or misunderstanding. Writing, he also argues, is a crutch for memory, and weakens the mind by diminishing our capacity for retaining information. In many ways, this criticism of writing resembles criticisms of those brought up in the early digital era. As one pundit argued of Gen Z in 2019:

> They are bright, innovative, confident in their skills on all manner of digital screens and devices: This is Generation Z, many of whom have little notion that they have begun to short-circuit some of the essential cognitive and affective processes that produced the digital world they inhabit. Furthermore, no small number of these young humans would grimace if asked to read this last sentence with its multiple clauses and syntactical demands. Reports from university and high school instructors like Mark Edmundson describe how many students no longer have the patience to read denser, more difficult texts like classic literature from the 19th and 20th centuries. I am less concerned with students' cognitive impatience than with their potential inability to read with the sophistication necessary to grasp the complexity of thought and argument found in denser, longer, more demanding texts, whether in literature and science classes or, later, in wills, contracts, and public referenda. The reality is that our young people are changing in ways that are as imperceptible to them as to most adults, particularly in how, what, and why they read—the cornerstone of how most humans think for the last few centuries with the spread of literacy.

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Chris understood the effects of technology … back in 1993.

In the digital era, the more things change, the more they stay the same. According to the author quoted above, people residing in wealthy, technology-consuming nations are on the precipice of a landmark generational change, with less memory of a pre-digital environment and more default, early-age engagements with digital technologies. The author's fears about Gen Z's reading habits resemble Socrates' fears about "memory" in the sense that both technological shifts are suspected to alter the course of human development. However, what neither author captures is how technologies like writing were – and computers are – unequally distributed among a social hierarchy of different peoples. While it may be true that Gen Z's reading habits may be changing, that may not be fully representative of the digital situation, such as for people who reside in exploited technology-manufacturing countries, for those who cannot afford such technologies, for those ignored by the design process, and for those targeted by surveillance. In the digital situation, many new media technologies retain traces of the social world of which they were a part, including the discriminatory policing, sexism, and racism that also characterized earlier eras of technological innovation and change.

Effects of the Digital Situation

So, what difference does the "digital" make? What's "new" about new media? What are the consequences of the digital situation for rhetoric and rhetorical forms of communication?

(1) The first consequence of the digital situation is that rhetoric *about* digital technologies is saturated with profound optimism and anxiety.

Because the digital age also increases the quantity of information with which we are routinely engaged, anxiety is rhetorically rendered as short-lived neologisms like *information overload,* the short-lived *too-much-*

information effect, information anxiety, and *infobesity* (Bawden and Robinson, "The Dark Side of Information," 181-5). As media theorist Mark Andrejevic claims, "we have become like the intelligence analysts overwhelmed by a tsunami of information or the market researcher trying to make sense of the exploding data 'troves' they have created and captured."

One reason that this information creates such anxiety is that it implicates enormous populations with the release of sensitive information. Those who have had their information compromised share an experience of anxiety at a mass level. 164m LinkedIn passwords in 2012, 427m MySpace passwords in 2013, 1b Yahoo accounts in 2013, 40m credit card imprints from Target in 2013, and 25gb of user information from Ashley Madison in 2015. This continual, successive leaking moves at multiple more-or-less perceptible speeds.

The **metaphor** of information "leaks" is deeply rooted in the metaphor of *information-as-fluid*. The rapid growth and proliferation of digital technologies leads Gregory Seigworth and Matthew Tiessen to describe them as *pools* for data aggregation and *plasma:* more-than-liquid currency flowing in rapid transnational currents. James Gleick calls the information revolution of the 20th century a "flood" to compare the cascade of "dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, compendiums of words, classifiers of facts, [and] trees of knowledge" to the rising tide of digital technology running from Charles Babbage to Sergei Brin. Klaus Theweleit writes that "the powerful metaphor of the flood engenders a clearly ambivalent state of excitement. It is threatening but also attractive ... [and] causes many things to flow: every brook and stream, still waters; floods of papers, political, literary, intellectual currents, influences. Everything is in flow, swimming upon this wave or that, with or against the current, in the mainstream or in tributaries."

(2) The second consequence of new digital technologies is that humans are imagined to be automatic choice-making communication machines, much like computers and other digital technologies.

This is most apparent in the recognition accorded to the work of behavioral economists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky and their probabilistic theory of "heuristics" – mathematical rules of irrational human behavior – explained in the book *Thinking Fast and Slow*. A heuristic is a mental shortcut for reasoning that, when misapplied, may consistently predict erroneous human behavior, when given the proper set-up and context. An example of a heuristic is the "hot hand fallacy," in which multiple consecutive successful outcomes – such as basketball free throws or gambling bets – seem to increase the probability of subsequent successful outcomes. Whether the "hot hand" is in fact a fallacy is a matter of popular dispute.

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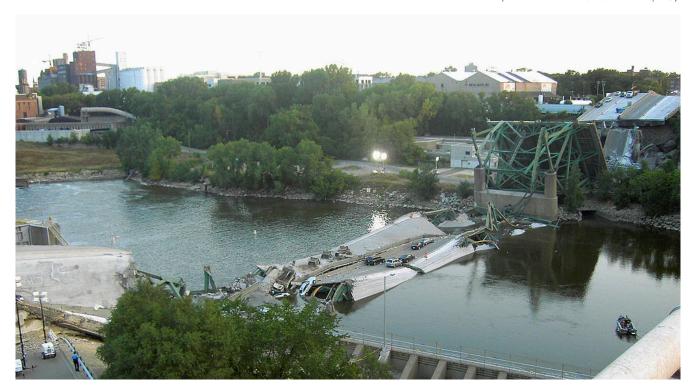
The "hot hand fallacy," as depicted by NBA Jam, a videogame on the Sega Genesis platform

According to (other) behavioral economists Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, authors of *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*:

> Unfortunately, people do not have accurate perceptions of what random sequences look like." ... "Players who have hit a few shots in a row or even most of their recent shots are said to have a "hot hand," which is taken by all sports announcers to be a good signal about the future. ... It turns out that the "hot hand" is just a myth. Players who have made their last few shots are no more likely to make their next shot (actually a bit less likely). Really. (27-8)

Other common examples of "heuristics" include *anchoring* and *availability*. The *anchoring* heuristic describes the approximations we make when we guess quantities or relative sizes. A person will typically begin with an "anchor" – a point of reference with which they are familiar – and guess from there. For example, when guessing the population of Madison, Wisconsin (~254,000) a correct guess may depend upon where you currently live. A resident of Chicago who knows the Illinois city has a population of 2.7 million but that Madison is significantly smaller might divide this number by 3, leading to a guess of 900,000. But someone who lives in Minneapolis, population 430,000 might, following the same logic, guess in the neighborhood of 143,000. Although the Minneapolis guess is still wrong, it is still significantly closer to the correct amount.

The *availability* heuristic describes a guess in which our ability to think of a relevant or vivid example may lead us to overestimate the risk of one event over another. If you are able to think of an example of something going awry, you may be more likely to be frightened, invested, and/or concerned than if such examples are not so readily available. For example, easily imagined causes of death such as tornadoes might be thought to cause greater devastation than other threats, such as asthma attacks. Similarly, recent events have a greater impact on our risk-based behaviors than those that occurred earlier in remembered time or recorded history.

An image of the August 1, 2007, I-35 bridge collapse in Minneapolis, MN, which was widely characterized as a structural engineering failure. Image by Mike Willis. CC BY-SA 2.0.

One significant flaw in the humans-as-computing-machines metaphor is that it encourages ways of thinking that are mathematically precise but divorced from a larger social context where the effects of design vary greatly depending upon race, ability, gender, and class. In "A Culture of Disengagement in Engineering Education," Erin A. Cech argues that engineering education, in particular, embraces the mentality that the world presents problems that can be solved by making the correct design choices, using decontextualized reasoning in which a solution employed under one specific set of circumstances will necessarily work in another, analogous context. The effect of this kind of abstraction is to ignore peoples' unique experiences of digital technologies and to generalize the communities where technological interventions are leveraged as 'solutions'. As Cech argues:

> "Disengagement may mean that things like public welfare considerations get *defined out of* engineering problems, excluded from the realm of responsibility that engineers carve out for themselves." … "Disengagement entails bracketing a variety of concerns not considered directly 'relevant' to the design or implementation of technological objects and systems, such as socioeconomic inequality, history, and global politics."

One example of this kind of disengagement is the proposal for "Amazon Go," a fully automated retail location run by the larger Amazon.com parent company. In 2016, Amazon.com introduced the idea of a worker-less store where Amazon customers would use a digital scanning system to gain access to a store and to pay for items. As advertised, this concept offered a seamless customer experience in which they could quickly walk in and out with what they needed. The advertisement features a diverse array of customers, seemingly

promising access to anyone who might wish to shop there. However, critics of Amazon Go quickly pointed out a number of flaws in the idea. The store, for instance, employs an intense form of customer surveillance to police shoplifting and the automation of the retail space effectively eliminated a number of jobs. Even before the creation of this warehouse/store, Amazon was credibly accused of having exacerbated housing insecurity. Having and gaining access to such a store would create even more visible divisions between those with food and housing, adding layers of difficulty for those without consistent housing – who would be prohibited from entering the store during inclement weather — and for those who wished to use electronic benefits transfers (EBT) and other food vouchers. By eliminating jobs and promising access only to those who could afford a membership, such locations would contribute to worsening problems of gentrification by eliminating lower-paying jobs and by making housing insecurity more visible – all the while promising easier, faster access to food and other basic needs.

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An advertisement for the "Amazon Go" retail concept

(3) The third consequence of the digital situation is related to the idea that every new technology bears the trace or residue of an older one.

According to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *"the content of new media is old media."* This phrase refers to the way that technology evolves, and how each "new" technological form retains the residue of the technologies that came before it. *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000), Bolter and Grusin argue media forms undergo a living evolution. Each new media form relies upon its predecessors for its meaning and its shape. PowerPoint, for instance, retains the "slides" from the images carousel and transparencies used on overhead projectors. The first computer programs were "written" upon punched paper cards, which were modeled after the Jacquard loom, which used interchangeable, patterned plates to create complex fabric designs.

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The trace of old technology in the new is called a *skeuomorph.* The punched card, for instance, retained a similar form and function to the 'cards' of the Jacquard loom. The floppy disk retained a similar function to the punched card, which was similarly inserted into computer equipment as it was read by a computer. The CD and the DVD retained a similar form and function to the floppy disc, which became the 'new' data storage devices read through optical technologies. Other common skeuomorphs include the standard "save" icon, which resembles a floppy disk, the "trash" or "recycle bin," which may not in fact remove data from the hard drive, or the common "folder" image, which in many cases looks like a folder that might be used in a filing cabinet. These images and representations are residues of earlier, related technologies of storage and transmission. They remind us of old physical storage media even as files are stored in virtual spaces, such as "clouds" and "servers."

Ever considered why the "save" icon is this funny square-like shape?

As N. Katherine Hayles explains in the (1999) *How we Became Posthuman:*

> A skeuomorph is a design feature that is no longer functional in itself but that refers back to a feature that was functional at an earlier time. The dashboard of my Toyota Camry, for example, is covered by vinyl molded to simulate stitching. The simulated stitching alludes back to a fabric that was in fact stitched, although the vinyl "stitching" is formed by an injection mold. Skeuomorphs visibly testify to the social or psychological necessity for innovation to be tempered by replication. Like anachronisms, their pejorative first cousins, skeuomorphs are not unusual. On the contrary, they are so deeply characteristic of the evolution of concepts and artifacts that it takes a great deal of conscious effort to avoid them.

Imitation wood car siding: Pining for the days of wooden vehicular transportation?

Skeuomorphs are the bits of new technology that remind us of its older versions. They are not just accidental features, unnecessary designs, or weird nostalgia; they are also a necessary part of technological evolution whereby already-familiar aspects of technology inhabit and inform the creation of the new. Recalling these aspects of technology – their superfluous but also essential features – is an important part of how they communicate across time.

Part 2: Keywords for the Digital Situation

This section introduces two key terms for the digital situation: *algorithm* and *big data*. As discussed in the previous section, these terms carry the weight of the old even as they symbolize what is 'new' about the digital situation and the transformative technologies it delivers. An important feature of these terminologies is that the older meanings and functions attached to media technologies still inform how we understand new media technologies. Rhetoric informs this understanding of media because it is similarly an "older" vocabulary that informs how many "new" techniques of persuasion and social action take shape in the 21st century.

Algorithm

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term *algorithm* originates from Arabic as a poor translation of the name al-Khwarizmi, the Persian author of a groundbreaking mathematical text on Arabic numerals. As cultural studies Ted Striphas explains in his essay, "Algorithmic Culture":

> [The] manuscript, Al-Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar fī ḥisāb al-jabr wa-al-Muqābala (The Compendious Book of Calculation by Restoration and Balancing) is the primary work through which the word algebra itself, adapted from the Arabic al-jabr, diffused through Moorish Spain into the languages of Western Europe Incidentally, the word appearing just before al-jabr in the Arabic version of the title, ḥisāb, though translated as calculation, also denotes arithmetic.

[There is a similarly complex history and evolution to the development of the term "algorithm."](#) It signifies the conceptual discovery of the zero and its incorporation into the number system. Even "zero" has a complex past because it has migrated across cultures and languages. *Zero* comes from *sunya*, the Sanskrit word for 'void.' This term migrated into the Arabic context as *sifr*, which means 'empty' and is the root from which the modern term *cypher* derives.

The Babylonian system of notation and the function of "0" within their number system. From Seife, ***Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea***, p.15

According to Charles Seife's ***Zero: The Biography of a Dangerous Idea***, zero's earliest known function is as a placeholder to symbolize a blank place in the abacus. It was used to distinguish between numbers like "61" and "3601," which the Babylonian system of written notation would otherwise represent identically. Zero is an exceptional digit, appended to existing number systems to indicate separation or distance between known values. Much like their disdain for rhetoric, the ancient Greeks "so despised zero that they refused to admit it into their writings, even though they saw how useful it was." (19) It poses an exception to the rule of number, both more and less than any other. It has extra characteristics relative to other numbers because it begins the number system, it is also less because, unlike other digits, it has no value and does nothing to increase or subtract from them.

The history and development of algorithms from a mathematical system of calculations into a proprietary technology is part of the reason why they seem to exercise a covert form of control over what we know and the decisions we make. As rhetoric and algorithm expert [Jeremy David Johnson](#) writes,

> The alchemic mysticism of algorithms is due in large part to their opacity, hiding from view how they govern networked reality. Democratic governance in networked spaces seems increasingly out of reach, particularly as algorithmic systems become "black boxes" hidden from public view. In response to exploits and security concerns, and with the promise of more cash, many central tech developers have closed off the code to their systems. (Information Keywords 2021, 35)

Algorithms are mysterious for a number of different reasons. They originate with a system of arithmetic that

seems divorced from a contemporary context in which mathematical protocols dictate how we search, find, and consume data. They have evolved into "black box" technologies, whereby the contents of a given algorithm is impossible to know because it a private and protected trade secret. Finally, they seem to wield secret control over our lives because they seem to exercise an invisible influence over us, steering our attention in ways that we do not perceive in the moment.

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Contemporary scholars and scholarship define algorithms in the following way: as procedures and protocols written in programming langauges that curate our experience of digital content. Algorithms present this content in addictive and appealing ways while drawing their power from the aggregative power of data analysis. They dictate how we encounter information at a variety of levels. Algorithms shape how we present ourselves and circulate on social media platforms as well as the security of our purchases, platforms, and passwords. According to Chris Ingraham, "algorithmic rhetoric" describes three 'levels' of persuasion enabled by this digital infrastructure.

The macro-rhetorical level of algorithmic rhetoric "requires attention to the circulation of discourse that contributes to elevating the status of algorithms as valuable technologies. The stakes here are epistemological, having to do with what counts as valid knowledge claims." (70) At this level, algorithms are conceptualized in general terms and celebrated for what they can (possibly) make known. It is a level of big claims, speculative investments, and dangerous idealism about the digital future. As Ingraham writes, "the macro-rhetorical invites us to think about how algorithms now "structure the planet" and come to "affect everything and everyone," whether we know it or not." (72)
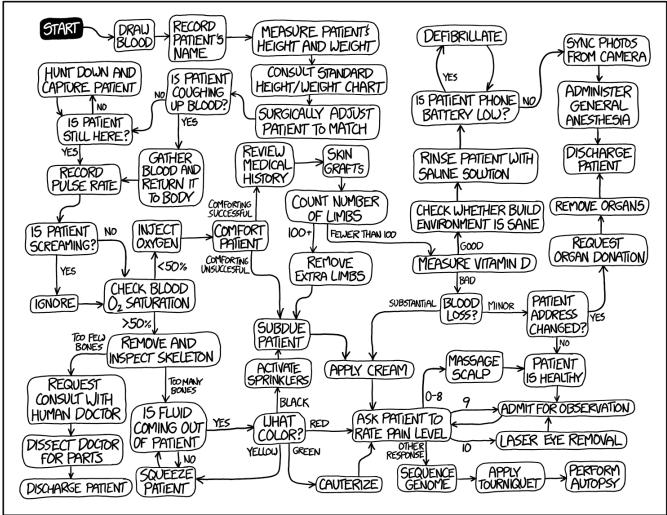
The prefix "Meta" signifies "above it all." And nothing says "above it all" like Sweet Baby Ray's.

The meso-rhetorical level of algorithmic rhetoric describes the choice-making that goes into the "The meso-rhetorical requires attention to identifying the category of technological operations we call "algorithms" as rhetorically constituted. The stakes here are ontological, having to do with the algorithm's nature." (70) Often, the meso-rhetorical level of algorithms is a "black box." As Frank Pasquale explains, the phrase "black box" often has a double meaning:

> "[Black boxes] can refer to a recording device, like the data-monitoring systems in planes, trains, and cars. Or it can mean a system whose workings are mysterious; we can observe its inputs and outputs, but we cannot tell how one becomes the other. We face these two meanings daily: tracked ever more closely by firms and government, we have no clear idea of just how far much of this information can travel, how it is used, or its consequences. (*The Black Box Society,* p.3)

In other words, the meso-rhetorical level of algorithms describes the debates about what algorithms *are*, what is or is not included within their parameters, and how much of their protocols remain hidden or secret. The ability and correctness of employing algorithms to track and sell consumer data, for instance, would constitute a series of choices made by programmers in the interest of defining what an algorithm *is.*

Original comic by xkcd. https://xkcd.com/1619/. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License.

The micro-rhetorical level of algorithmic rhetoric concerns their impacts and effects upon audiences. "The micro-rhetorical requires critiquing the repercussions and implications of algorithmic rhetoric in its particular instantiations." (70) Such implications range from impacts upon communities to effects for a nation or population. In April 2009, Amazon.com garnered public attention for mis-categorizing a large library of literature. Cultural studies scholar Ted Striphas explains how the saga unfolded from the perspective of author Mark R. Probst in his essay, "Algorithmic Culture":

> Hoping the matter was a simple mistake, he wrote to Amazon customer service. The agent who emailed Probst explained that Amazon had a policy of filtering 'adult' material out of most product listings. Incensed, Probst posted an account of the incident on his blog in the wee hours of Easter Sunday morning, pointing out inconsistencies in the retailer's policy. The story was subsequently picked up by major news outlets, who traced

incidences of gay and lesbian titles disappearing from Amazon's main product list back to February 2009. In a press release issued on Monday afternoon, a spokesperson for Amazon attributed the fiasco to 'an embarrassing and ham-fisted cataloging error'. More than 57,000 books had been affected in all, including not only those with gay and lesbian themes but also titles appearing under the headings 'Health, Mind, Body, Reproductive and Sexual Medicine, and Erotica'. An Amazon technician working in France reportedly altered the value of a single database attribute – 'adult' – from false to true. The change then spread globally throughout the retailer's network of online product catalogs, de-listing any books that had been tagged with the corresponding metadata (James, 2009b). This was not homophobia, Amazon insisted, but a slip-up resulting from human error amplified by the affordances of a technical system.

Big Data

The general term used to describe the transition to a mode of data analysis concerned with processing, analyzing, and monetizing large volumes of information is *big data.* The term captures a shift in how knowledge is defined and mobilized, one that is largely quantitative in nature and emphasizes the role of correlations – the probabilistic association of different data points or sets – over causation – the linear, one-after-another sequence of events in which the determinants of some phenomenon *B* are associated with some initating event *A*. According to Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier, the authors of the 2014 book *Big Data: A Revolution that Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think,*

> "big data" refers to things one can do at a large scale that cannot be done at a smaller one, to extract new insights or create new forms of value, in ways that change markets, organizations, the relationship between citizens and government, and more. (6)

It is difficult to conceive of the size and scale of "big data," or the extent to which analyzable bodies of information have grown in the 20th and 21st centuries. The expansion of data concerns our ability to map the universe and the genome, as well as the storage and transmission of information via commonly used search engines like Google. It implicates events like cyberattacks, where the quantity and sensitivity of the information that is hacked or leaked consistently increases over time. It also concerns the kinds of networks that are formed and made possible through forms of digital connectivity, which are both employed in ways that promote community and that foster "networks of outrage" that unravel into baseless conspiracy theories and public violence. As rhetorical scholar Damien Pfister writes:

> These phenomena are all enabled by the underlying abundance of information that encourages the creation of echo chambers or filter bubbles, which, in the wake of the events of 2016, have been understood as sites where "alternative facts" have ushered in "post- truth" politics. The anxieties around this outburst of proto- fascist emotion are warranted at the same time that they may be somewhat misplaced: truth has always been slipperier than philosophers and politicians have assumed, and today's neo- fascist revival can be traced to liberalism's latest crisis as a public philosophy and a widening rich/poor gap as much as information abundance. (Information Keywords 2021, 27)

Sometimes, a large quantity of information leads nowhere in particular.

The 'bigness' of big data is also connected to rhetoric in other ways, namely through the terms *megethos* and *copia*. These terms describe how speech may create the impression of tremendous size or volume.
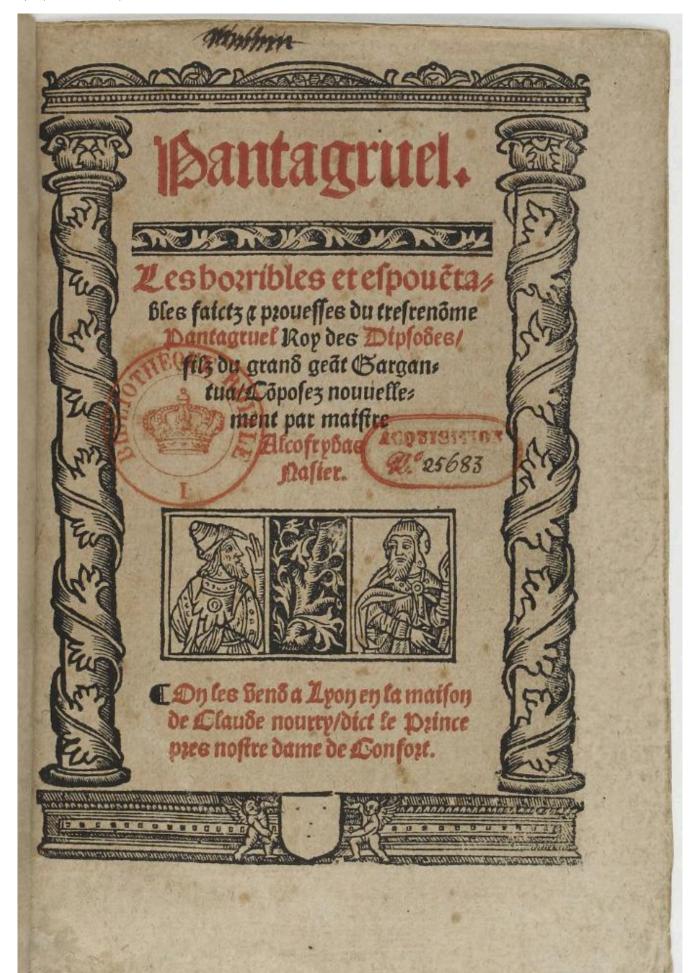
The term **megethos** describes how rhetoric creates the impression of tremendous importance or magnitude. In his 1998 article, "Sizing Things Up," rhetorical scholar Thomas Farrell claims that "magnitude has to do with gravity, the enormity, the weightiness of what is enacted, a sense of significance that may be glimpsed and recognized by others." *Megethos* is what lends this gravitas to events, speech, and language. It is an aesthetic or presentational form that is traditionally focused on *vision* and what can (or cannot) be properly 'taken in' at a glance. One example of *megethos* is the framing and reporting of "mega-leaks," whereby huge troves of information are released into public. In the case of the Panama Papers released by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, *megethos* consisted in the sheer volume of the documentation. In 2016, Lisa Lynch and David Levine explained this "mega-leaking" in the following way:

> The Panama papers consisted of "11.5 million files covering 40 years' worth of transactions from over 14,000 law firms, banks and incorporation agencies that had hired the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca to assist in creating offshore companies for purposes of tax avoidance. ... Though the documents were not released en masse, a total of 400 journalists from 76 countries pored through them using a purpose-built database and a customized social network that allowed them to communicate their findings securely. During the course of the investigation, which took over a year, all the journalists and their media outlets respected an embargo agreement that kept their findings secret until a pre-arranged collective deadline. (1)

As the authors also argue, the mega-leak is double-sided. On the one hand, it promotes a kind of openness and accountability that would have been impossible in earlier times, creating a site for transparency and public oversight. On the other hand, it also means that the "trove of information" that comes with mega-leaks has no pre-determined system or agency of analysis. Instead, "search and analysis functions fall to the public," making the significance of huge information archives difficult to assess and slow to reach a wider global public's attention.

Copia is a rhetorical term that describes the strategic creation of size through a pattern of repetition. It is a way of generating an impression of size or magnitude by enumerating *all* of a given object's features, so much so that it is apparent to the reader or audience that there is still more to tell about the topic that has not yet been enumerated. *Copia* describes endless, limitless plenitude, a kind of "whole" or "totality" that is alluded to but never perceived. When, for instance, the historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1970) describes

CHAPTER 14: THE DIGITAL SITUATION | 277

the creation of new knowledge in medieval Europe, he calls this information "plethoric and poverty-stricken." Although there was a *lot* of information, it was un-searchable and disorganized due to the protocols used to generate it. Sometimes, *copia* is described as a way to account for the rhetorical power of lists, which may make compelling arguments through a gratuitous enumeration of a given topic, performing magnitude through an excess of detail. A famous example is Francois Rabelais's 16th-century text, *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* which makes significant use of this trope.

The title-page of a 1532 edition of "Pantagruel." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gargantua_and_Pantagruel

As rhetorical scholar Thomas Conley (1985) explains in his article, "The Beauty of Lists: *Copia* and Argument,"

> In a similar way, the "treatise" on the virtues of the herb "Pantagruelion" amplifies the stock epidectic topoi: first, a careful and detailed description of its appearance, its usefulness, ways of preparing it, and its inestimable virtues, both quotidian and those of the grander sort; then, famous incidents in history, both real and mythical, in which it played an important part; its role in the achievements of human ingenuity; its fortitude and strength; comparisons with other plants and with the gods and goddesses themselves, all documented with references to Pliny, Theophrastus, Galen, and various Arabian writers. "Pantagruelion," of course, is hemp. The praise of Pantagruelion, that is, is an extended encomium on "rope." (98)

Another famous example of *copia* comes from the famous courtroom scene of a 1944 noir film, *Double Indemnity*. During the scene, detective Keyes questions an expert witness, Mr. Norton, the owner of the Pacific All Risk Insurance Company. Keyes's line of questioning, copied below, seeks to undermine Mr. Norton's assumption that the claim is invalid due to the circumstances of a suspicious death:

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Copia verborum in the film *Double Indemnity*

> You've never read an actuarial table in your life, have you? Why there are ten volumes on suicide alone. Suicide: by race, by color, by occupation, by sex, by season of the year, by time of day. Suicide, how committed: by poison, by firearms, by drowning, by leaps. Suicide by poison, subdivided by types of poison, such as corrosives, irritants, systemic gases, narcotics, alkaloids, proteins, and so forth. Suicide by leaps, subdivided by leaps from high places, under the wheels of trains, under the wheels of trucks, under the feet o f horses, under steamboats. But, Mr. Norton, of all the cases on record, there's not one single case of suicide by someone jumping off the back end of a moving train. (also cited in Joan Copjec, Read My Desire, p.164)

The questioning relies on the *copia* trope because it provides a list of information as a kind of rhetorical proof that Mr. Norton's suspicions are unfounded. By enumerating all of the different ways that the insurance company has quantified and categorized risk, Keyes arrives at the conclusion that Norton's proposed explanation of events is highly improbable. In keeping with the theme of "the more things change the more they stay the same," rhetorical vocabularies function today as in the past. Terms like *megethos* and *copia* help to distinguish between the kinds of magnitude and the 'bigness' of big data.

Part 3: Digital Dystopia and Algorithms of Oppression

The digital situation is particularly representative of the way that rhetorical modes of communication can uphold existing hierarchies of power while also claiming to be wholly new or different from what has come before. This is especially the case with racist computer engineering terms, the way that optical technologies are designed for white skin pigmentation (such as this widely reported racist soap dispenser), and the regressive gender dynamics of Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Assistants (AI/VA) commonly used in the home and workplace. Taken together, these aspects of the digital situation illustrate how the unbridled optimism for what technologies can or might do to create a better world is a flawed perspective. Key critics of digital technology insist that manufacturers and consumers take into account the structural inequalities that inhabit new and digitally organized systems of communication.

Problems with Racist Computational Metaphors

One significant problem with the terminology used to designate computer hardware and software is that it carries the residue (or *skeuomorph*) of racist distinctions used to segregate and distinguish between differently raced populations. A key problem is that this terminology is often presumed to be neutral and objective, in the sense that these names denote components and processes and are not intentionally discriminatory. However, this language still carries a destructive and dehumanizing force even if those who employ the terminology have forgotten or choose to ignore their original significations.

> In June [2020], against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter protests, engineers at social media platforms, coding groups, and international standards bodies re-examined their code and asked themselves: Was it racist? Some of their databases were called "masters" and were surrounded by "slaves," which received information from the masters and answered queries on their behalf, preventing them from being overwhelmed. Others used "whitelists" and "blacklists" to filter content.

Ultimately, a core issue is that existing terminologies flippantly reference historical dynamics of oppression as metaphors for the ways that storage and retrieval devices are organized, or otherwise, repeat a longstanding bias that associates "whiteness" with virtuous activity while consigning "Blackness" to the opposite. This kind of terminology supports unconscious biases and registers as a kind of linguistic violence because it implies that such distinctions are not serious or should be ignored when they are, in fact, deeply impactful.

A related criticism of these kinds of terminologies is that the effort to rename is good, but does not go far enough. Whereas corporations like Google and Intel have committed to more inclusive language and naming practices, this linguistic 'fix' does not necessarily address the deeper structural issues of representation and discrimination that are a part of Silicon Valley's corporate culture. One example is Timnit Gebru's

expulsion from Google following her letter concerning the racial biases of the optical face-recognition artificial intelligence being developed at the company. According to Gebru, the company's reluctance to acknowledge the racist problems with its technology went beyond language choices or even facial recognition alone. The letter signaled that the larger environment of Silicon Valley characteristically espoused anti-racist values while producing technologies that reinforced existing racial biases. According to the MIT Technology Review:

> On December 2, 2020, Timnit Gebru, the co-lead of Google's ethical AI team, announced via Twitter that the company had forced her out.
>
> Gebru, a widely respected leader in AI ethics research, is known for coauthoring a groundbreaking paper that showed facial recognition to be less accurate at identifying women and people of color, which means its use can end up discriminating against them. She also cofounded the Black in AI affinity group, and champions diversity in the tech industry. The team she helped build at Google is one of the most diverse in AI and includes many leading experts in their own right. Peers in the field envied it for producing critical work that often challenged mainstream AI practices.
>
> Online, many other leaders in the field of AI ethics are arguing that the company pushed her out because of the inconvenient truths that she was uncovering about a core line of its research—and perhaps its bottom line. More than 1,400 Google staff members and 1,900 other supporters have also signed a letter of protest.

In other words, the metaphors used to describe computational technologies (e.g. "white-hats" and "black-hats") are a symptom of a deeper, structural problem in which the terminology and the function of digital technologies work to uphold conditions of structural inequality. Changing the language is a crucial step to changing these beliefs, but it is not sufficient to see just how deeply rooted and widespread racism is within contexts of digital design.

Problems with Programmed Gender Dynamics

Gender is represented by digital technologies such as the "virtual assistant," which reproduces relational expectations where women are assigned submissive or subordinate social roles. In "Asking more of Siri and Alexa," digital rhetoric scholar Heather Woods explains how Apple, Amazon, and other corporations reinforce regressive expectations about femininity and servitude by using voices and encouraging communicative patterns where technologies – many of which have a distinctly feminine voice as a default setting. Artificial Intelligence/Virtual Assistant technologies do the work of "digital domesticity," which "mobilizes traditional, conservative values of homemaking, care-taking, and administrative "pink-collar" labor. By making artificial intelligence-based products in the image of such traditionalist roles, the digital situation reproduces "stereotypical feminine roles in the service of augmenting surveillance capitalism." Virtual assistants are sold as a matter of consumer choice, being sold on the belief that the technology will enable them to do more things or free themselves from burden by spending money. However, these technologies often work the other way.

By collecting user information for future monetization, virtual assistants also serve the financial goals of the company that manufactured it.

The unique rhetorical term that Woods lends to the feminine personification of AI/VA is *persona*. When rhetoric is understood as *speech*, persona refers to the constitution of an audience through the intentional choices of the speaker. Woods describes *persona* as a kind of mask, "a communicative strategy for imagining the self and the audience as connected in a particular, shared way."

> The domestic sphere is one theater in which femininity has undergone technologically-mediated modifications whilst mobilizing traditional performances of persona. New arrangements of domesticity at once rely upon stereotypical identities of femininity while slightly altering them (White, 2015, p. 19). The concept of "digital domesticity" has been used by scholars to describe the re-articulation of "prototypical motherhood" (Chen, 2013, p. 511) in the blogosphere and, more generally, domesticity has served as a key organizing metaphor for the rise of "smart homes" (Spigel, 2001). Chen's study of "mommy bloggers" demonstrates how possibly liberatory practices (namely: blogging about personal experiences of mothering) are disciplined by constraining language practices. This foreclosure of radical politics constitutes a reentry into what Chen calls "digital domesticity," characterized by traditional norms of stereotypical femininity. As implied by the term, digital domesticity signifies the reworking of femininity through technological mediation.

The "particular, shared connection" invoked by AI/VA is one that should remind us of a long history in which feminine-presenting persons occupy a *de facto* subordinate role. Because the default settings of AI/VA are vocally feminized, programs like Siri and Alexa perpetuate this hegemonic and repressive way of thinking. However, AI/VA also cultivates unequal forms of gender relationality as a way to generate capital, enriching the technology companies who profit from the user's intimate relationship with the virtual product. If AI/VA is imagined as a proprietary profit-generating surveillance device, then it is one that is purchased by choice on the promises of relief and the technology's relationship to its users.

Problems with Unequal Digital Infrastructures

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The third collection of problems with profit-forward digital platforms and technologies concerns the effects that they have at a wider population level. According to media scholar Zeynep Tufecki, the consumer-forward focus of digital technologies means that ethical considerations often fall to the side in favor of imagining new ways to get more clicks and likes. As a consequence of this kind of design, technology companies ignore the potentially addictive qualities of their digital environments, preying on people who are vulnerable to gambling

or are unaware of how to keep their information secure. As Tufecki argues, digital platforms are "persuasion architectures," updated forms of familiar information systems like check-out counters and automated roadside speedometers. However, unlike these earlier forms of technology, newer digital platforms seek out exploitable psychological weaknesses on the part of consumers in the effort to turn a profit.

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The problems with digital infrastructures also run significantly deeper, particularly when we consider the default assumptions that search engines encourage and reinforce. In *Algorithms of Oppression*, digital media scholar Safiya Umoja Noble describes the way that Google's allegedly neutral search platform reinscribes destructive gender roles through the "pornification" of women and girls – in other words – encouraging search results that reduce people to sexualized commodities. In the process, search engines also erase realistic and professional representations of women, Black people, and immigrant populations. Rather than prioritizing a social or public good, "Google biases search to its own economic interests – for its profitability and to bolster its market dominance at any expense" (27) As Noble explains:

> Knowledge of the technical aspects of search and retrieval, in terms of critiquing the computer programming code that underlies the systems, is absolutely necessary to have a profound impact on these systems. Interventions such as Black Girls Code, an organization focused on teaching young, African American girls to program, is the kind of intervention we see building in response to the ways Black women have been locked out of Silicon Valley venture capital and broader participation. Simultaneously, it is important for the public, particularly people who are marginalized – such as women and girls and people of color – to be critical of the results that purport to represent them in the first ten to twenty results in a commercial search engine. They do not have the economic, political, and social capital to withstand the consequences of misrepresentation. If one holds a lot of power, one can withstand or buffer misrepresentation at a group level and often at the individual level. Marginalized and oppressed people are linked to the status of their group and are less likely to be afforded individual status and insulation from the experiences of the groups with which they are identified. The political nature of search demonstrates how algorithms are a fundamental invention of computer scientists who are human beings – and code is a langauge full of meaning and applied in varying ways to different types of information. Certainly, women and people of color could benefit tremendously from becoming programmers and building alternative search engines that are less disturbing and that reflect and prioritize a wider range of informational needs and perspectives (Algorithms of Oppression, 25-26).

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ASSIGNMENTS AND STUDY GUIDES

SHORT PAPER 1: THE ENCOMIUM

The encomium is one way that we can try to understand the sophists' way of understanding rhetoric as a way of creating or constituting social reality. Sometimes the sophists' creation of a shared fantasy is described as a "deception," in which the speaker misleads the audience into believing false information. Other scholars have claimed that what the sophists did was not "deception," but rather that they "[placed] all possible representations of reality on equal epistemological footing," creating the opportunity to compare different kinds of knowledge. (2001, 58-59).

Why did Helen even need to be rescued in the Encomium? Because it was a popular and misogynistic myth among the Greeks that Helen had been the 'cause' of the Trojan war. They attributed the start of the war specifically to the fact that Helen, wife to Menelaus, had been taken by Paris of Troy immediately after the Trojans and Greeks had signed a peace treaty.

The Encomium of Helen "rescues" Helen from this blame, but it does so in a way is itself deeply misogynistic, that is, in a way that also reduces her freedom or agency. By Gorgias' account, Helen is a passive object who cannot be made to assume responsibility for a path she could not herself have chosen. Helen is redeemed, in his eyes, because she can be made a non-agent; she cannot be responsible for her actions because her only option was to acquiesce to more powerful forces.

> "either by will of fate and decision of the gods and vote of Necessity did she do what she did, or by force reduced, or by words seduced, or by love possessed."

The encomium of Helen is both a rescue of Helen and a rescue of rhetoric. If the speech can rescue Helen, it shows something about the way that words can create a shared social reality, how rhetoric can move people and constitute a new common sense.

Assignment Instructions

For this assignment, students should compose a 2-page long encomium that performs a rescue of a topic that has been disparaged or ignored and that deserves a new or fresh take. Encomiums can range from the serious to the comedic; they can seek to shed light on serious conditions of social inequality or injustice or, alternatively, they can give a boost to a celebrity, job, or hobby that is usually ridiculed as unserious or eccentric. I have provided examples of each I encourage students to research their encomia, which should include a bibliography or works cited of 3-5 sources. If students are seeking a template for how to organize their ideas, please consider the materials provided below.

1. Select your topic on the basis of its legitimately unfair public treatment or its relative inconspicuousness.

2. Establish the popular reasons why this topic has been scrutinized, how it has been judged, and why such judgments were rendered.
3. Finally, systematically refute these reasons by placing your subject in the best possible light.

Observations and Advice

A. Be sure to provide sufficient information to justify the fact that the topic has been "unfairly disparaged" (underrated, minimized, trivialized, belittled, undervalued). Just because it's your favorite (movie, restaurant, band) does not mean it's been treated unfairly. Similarly, "everyone knows that X is bad" does not provide adequate grounding for celebrating the topic. This is where you may need additional evidence. This completes only half of what the encomium is: proving that the topic has been disparaged, and then rescuing it.

B. Evidence can be used (a) to show that the topic has been unfairly treated and (b) to show what is redeeming or worthy of reconsideration. I've also gotten questions about a few topics that are too specific, such that there doesn't seem to be much evidence to support it. For example, if you're rescuing an underused hashtag, there may not be a lot out there. The solution in such cases is to broaden the topic as appropriate. Instead of rescuing one film that did poorly at the box office, rescue films that do poorly at the box office. That opens a range of examples and evidence.

C. The assignment asks for "credible" evidence, which may seem like an ambiguous term. Credible means that it comes from a source that has some authority on the subject. It means that you can consider a wide range of sources, including newspapers, magazines, news organizations, widely circulated blogs, academic sources, advertisements, speeches, even social media. If you'd like to cite a reddit thread or a tweet with a LOT of likes that makes your point, be my guest. For the purposes of this assignment, credible means that shouldn't be the main or only evidence that you provide in the paper.

D. Be careful not to interpret "encomium" as "satire." Instead of truly rescuing a topic, some encomiums from previous semesters only pretended to rescue a topic while, in fact, roasting (or insulting) it. Unfortunately, the absence of a rescue (i.e. if it is only a "rescue" in scare quotes or sarcastically) means that it is not an encomium. An encomium is different than satire because it sets out reasons that something has been disparaged or 'beat up' and then systematically rescues this person, object, or idea from this bad reputation. This is the gist of the Encomium of Helen as well as the examples considered in class/the assignment document, which rescue people or ideas that have gotten bad press and deserve a second look (immigrant refugees, heelys, etc.). An encomium works if the speaker's/writer's reasons for rescuing the topic convincingly address the arguments against it. With satire, the speaker takes on a disingenuous role that is meant to mock or insult the person, object, or idea represented. A satire works if the audience is in on the speaker's/writier's ruse and can successfully understand the speech or writing

as a criticism of the topic.

E. As mentioned above, a key problem with the encomium speech is that the "rescue" doesn't match the "reputation" described. This common issue describes an imbalance in the speech. This imbalance can happen in at least two ways.

    A. The blame can be so egregious or overwhelming that a rescue isn't possible. This is when the "negative" part of the speech outweighs its "positive" redemption. Someone may pick a topic for which a bad reputation has been rightly earned but the "rescue" simply doesn't address the reputation or tries to present new information that does not seek to change the reader's perspective on what we already know. For example, a celebrity who gained an early advantage because they are wealthy cannot be redeemed by claiming they are "good at performing" because the rescue doesn't match up with the accusation.

    B. The wish to rescue can be so overwhelming that it is difficult to find negative aspects of the topic. The rescue may be about someone or something that the author really likes but then the "blame" may be nonexistent or imagined. This is the "fanny pack" problem: many folks might really, really like fanny packs and argue that they're coming 'back in style' or that they are unfairly disparaged. But there must be evidence that the fanny pack is or was unpopular — which may be hard to come by. There might not be sufficient evidence that they have been disparaged or the author may just presume that they have a bad reputation. Ultimately, you also have to prove that a negative opinion about the object or item exists.

F. As a final guideline, there are topics we should refuse to rescue, especially when the "rescue" is made for the sake of provocation or entails a justification of racism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, violence, or other offensive premises (e.g. the 'rescue' of the glass ceiling). Submissions seeking to rescue such principles will receive a failing grade. Students may reach out to Prof. Hallsby directly if you have any further questions regarding the earned grade for this assignment if the submitted paper falls into this category.

Topics	Cut-Off Jeans, or Jorts	Worst Restaurant in Town
Black Friday	**Intro:** The Cut-off look is unfairly disparaged, and I'm going to seek to rescue it. Maybe there's a practical reason for cut-off sleeves (exercise/laundry).	**Intro:** I'm going to rescue (Restaurant) even though it has been ridiculed a lot.
The Cost of the latest iPhone	**Main Point 1:** People who wear it don't have an accurate sense of how they look.	**Main Point 1:** People say the food is bad. But actually, we should focus on how affordable the food is. It's certainly not the most expensive.
Heelys	**Main Point 2:** People should wear things that give themselves confidence in their body image.	**Main Point 2:** People who say that the food is poorly cooked should be more vocal about how they want their meals prepared!
Lime Bikes/scooters	In sum, stop wearing shorts and don't mock the jorts!	Face it, you LIKE complaining about (Restaurant)!
Family stickers on cars		
Socks and sandals		
Crocs		
Gamestop		

Encomium Activity 1: Encomium Topic Brainstorm

You may copy and paste this blank worksheet into a separate document for yourselves if you would like to retain the notes from this exercise for yourself.

   Generate Topics: Here is a list of all the topics from this class.

   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.
   7.
   8.

Narrow Your Topic: Some topics are better than others. An *unclear topic* is one that has a number of different meanings, occurs in a number of different contexts, and that might grip our attention for one of many reasons. A *vague topic* specifies an area of interest, but remains too broad in scope for a five-to-seven minute speech. A *superior topic* is specific, meaning that it refers to a particular object, idea, person, or event.

- Unclear:
- Vague:
- Specific:

Main and Supporting Arguments:

- *Main Argument*

  ◦ *Supporting Argument 1:*

  ◦ *Supporting Argument 2:*

Evidence for your Claims:

- *Evidence for Supporting Argument:*

- *Evidence for Supporting Argument:*

Encomium Activity 2: Name, Explain, Prove, Conclude.

For this activity, we will break into small groups to generate topics for the encomium paper and provide feedback that will help narrow the topic and develop new claims. My hope is that it starts you on the path to a well-developed topic.

1. Begin by creating a list of topics generated by the group. Perhaps you have already decided on a topic. Perhaps you need an opportunity to idea-test something that you've been working with but aren't sure about. Perhaps you don't have a sense of what you want to write about. Start with the topics that folks have already decided upon, then brainstorm other topics with the group.

2. Go through the narrowing process: is the topic too broad or too narrow? In class, we talked about "fashion" as being a topic that was too broad and "an under-noticed release by a favorite artist on SoundCloud" as too narrow. Ultimately, each essay will have to find reasons why the topic has received an unfairly negative reputation and then redeem your topic from this criticism.

3. Separate the thesis from the supporting arguments. How would you phrase an encomium thesis for each of the topics? What are the supporting claims? Think about the research-heavy arguments of the essay in the following way (but not necessarily this order):

   1. What are the arguments or attitudes against the topic? What evidence is there that this opinion

exists? Why does this/their opinion matter?

    2. What are the corresponding positive arguments? Does each of the claims that stands in favor of the topic match up with one of the arguments or attitudes against it? How does the positive argument overcome the negative claim against it?

4. Brainstorm evidence for arguments a and b. Who are opinion leaders on this topic? What are authoritative sources? Why are these sources the most respected, widely accepted, or authoritative on this topic? Can you explain this relevance when you cite this source?

5. Take some time to organize your claims

- Name it: what is the supporting argument?
- Explain it: describe its significance or connection to the larger thesis.
- Prove it: cite your key evidence
- Conclude it: what's the connection between the evidence and thesis, summarize the 'take-away'

Overview on Topical Organization of Speeches/Essays

How to organize an Encomium main point about Jorts, or jean-shorts.

1. Name it: Despite their reputation, jorts are an environmentally friendly option.
2. Explain it: Jorts extend the lifespan of worn jeans by giving them a second life.
3. Prove it: The past two years, I have not had to buy or throw away any shorts.
4. Conclude it: Jorts are a long-lasting option that don't end up in the landfill.

Stasis Theory

1. The facts of the case (**conjecture**) What do we know and how do we know it?
2. The meaning of the issue (**definition**) Can we agree on the topic?
3. The seriousness of the issue (**quality**) So what, who cares?
4. The plan of action (**policy**). What do we do next? How do we do it?

Speech in Defense

1. **Proem** (preface or preamble), exordium (introduction), and argument (thesis).
2. **Narratio**, upon which all opposed sides likely agree.
3. **Divisio**, about the ideas which sets you apart.
4. **Proof**, the evidence.
5. **Refutatio**, a reply to the accuser or the likely opponent.

Some Protocols for editing: (what steps should I take to turn in a "clean" draft?)

1. Read the manuscript aloud for errors.
2. Read the manuscript aloud for time (presenting).
3. Determine sections for cutting and unnecessary language.
4. Assess whether the different sections are balanced .

Topic/Organization Example

Generate Topic Ideas: Vaccination, Medicine, Popular and public responses to infectious diseases, historical events related to medical discoveries.

   Narrow Your Topic:

- Unclear: Vaccinations
- Vague: The History of Cholera
- Specific: The Great Stinks of <u>1880</u> and <u>1858</u>

Main and Supporting Arguments:

- *Main Argument:* The Great Stink of 1880 in <u>Paris</u> and the Great Stink of 1858 in <u>London</u> have the reputation of, well being smelly and unpleasant times. But they also coincided with important developments in the history of medicine and popular culture.
  - *Supporting Argument 1:* For example, the Stinks coincided with a turning point in the history of medicine when people ceased to believe that diseases were transmitted by smell and instead began to understand that it was transmitted by germs.
  - *Supporting Argument 2*: Another reason why the Great Stink was important is that it was also part of the way that perfume became popularized in the modern era. With great need comes great demand!

Evidence for your Claims:

- *Evidence for Supporting Argument 1:* According to historian <u>David S. Barnes</u>, the "Great Stink" of Paris occurred at a time when the science of medicine was changing, but popular opinion had yet to change with it. People still believed that infectious disease was transmitted through smell, as they had during the medieval "plague" or "black death".

- *Evidence for Supporting Argument 2:* Additionally, although there is no proven cause/effect relationship

between the mass availability of perfume and the great stink of 1880, Eugénie Briot explains that the production and distribution of perfumes in France expanded dramatically in the last two decades of the 19th century.

Now, Name it, Explain it, Prove it, and Conclude it:

Supporting Argument 1:

- *Name it:* (**from above**) The Stinks coincided with a turning point in the history of medicine when people ceased to believe that diseases were transmitted by smell and instead began to understand that it was transmitted by germs.
- *Explain it*: Whereas pre-enlightenment understandings of disease explained their in terms of "putrid odors" or "decaying smells," the development of germ theory throughout the 1900s posited that organisms caused infection, creating new courses of treatment.
- *Prove it:* (**from above**) According to historian David S. Barnes, the "Great Stink" of Paris occurred at a time when the science of medicine was changing, but popular opinion had yet to change with it. People still believed that infectious disease was transmitted through smell, as they had during the medieval "plague" or "black death".
- *Conclude it:* Even though the Stinks, well, stunk, they still are important for the way that they mark an important transformation in the history of medical knowledge.

Supporting Argument 2:

- *Name it:* (**from above**) Another reason why the Great Stink was important is that it was also part of the way that perfume became popularized in the modern era. With great need comes great demand!

- *Explain it:* Paris is historically significant for originating modern perfumery, which is often thought to be a marker of elevated status or class, when in fact it also had a very practical role in creating a breathable space around the wearer.

- *Prove it* (**from above**) Although there is no proven cause/effect relationship between the mass availability of perfume and the great stink of 1880, Eugénie Briot explains that the production and distribution of perfumes in France expanded dramatically in the last two decades of the 19th century.

- *Conclude it*: Today, we may wonder why someone's perfume or cologne is so strong. But back in the 1880s, these strong, musty smells kept the big Stink at bay.

Topic/Organization Worksheet (blank)

You may copy and paste this blank worksheet into a separate document for yourselves if you would like to retain the notes from this exercise for yourself.

Generate Topics: Here is a list of all the topics from this class/group.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Narrow Your Topic: Some topics are better than others. An *unclear topic* is one that has a number of different meanings, occurs in a number of different contexts, and that might grip our attention for one of many reasons. A *vague topic* specifies an area of interest, but remains too broad in scope for a five-to-seven minute speech. A *superior topic* is specific, meaning that it refers to a particular object, idea, person, or event.

- Unclear:
- Vague:
- Specific:

Main and Supporting Arguments:

- Main Argument

    ◦ Supporting Argument 1:

    ◦ Supporting Argument 2:

Evidence for your Claims:

- *Evidence for Supporting Argument:*
- *Evidence for Supporting Argument:*

Name it, Explain it, Prove it, Conclude it:

- *Name it:*

- *Explain it:*

- *Prove it:*

- *Conclude it:*

Encomium Activity 3: Workshop for Short Paper 1

About this activity: Today we will collaboratively 'grade' two examples of encomia to think about how to edit and improve the speeches/essays you have started to write. We will also break into groups so that you might share your developed ideas with others in the class.

How is the Encomium Graded?

The rubric includes the following grading criteria. You should use the criteria for the introduction, organization, and examples to guide your break-out discussion. The criteria below are graded on the following scale (2 = Excellent/Exceptionally Clear; 1.6 = Satisfactory/Clear; 1.2 = Unsatisfactory/Unclear; 0 = content missing)

- *Introduction:* The introduction contains a clear attention getting device, thesis, purpose, and preview statement. The thesis specifically offers a "rescue" of the topic at hand.

- *Organization:* The topic sentences of the body paragraphs clearly relate to the thesis and reflect the mission of the encomium to "rescue" a disparaged topic.

- *Examples:* The essay offers well-cited examples in their rescue of the concept(s), people, or object(s) defined in the essay. These examples also support the "rescue" of the central topic, or otherwise establish that the topic has been unfairly disparaged.
- *Clarity of Writing:* The essay has a clear 'flow' from beginning to end, is clearly proofread and contains minimal typographical or grammatical errors.

The criterion below is graded on the following scale: (1 = excellent; 0.8 = satisfactory; 0.6 = unsatisfactory; 0 = document is unreadable)

- *Formatting:* Essay is easy to follow visually, properly formatted according to standard assignment guidelines (Calibri or Times New Roman; 11.5 or 12pt font, double spaced), and does not exceed three pages (not including citations).

The criteria below is graded on the following scale: (1 = full marks; 0.6 = missing citations; 0 = no citations).

- *Citations*: The essay contains 3-5 properly formatted and credible citations that appear in-text and at the end of the document in a works cited page. The works cited page does not count toward students' overall word/page count.

Encomium Sample 1 (for class evaluation purposes)

Athens is a small town known for some great things: the music, the downtown scene, the culture, and the history. But what is something that Athens is really known for? Their food; the local restaurants that people come from all over to eat and experience. One of these amazing restaurants that is overlooked is the delicious Chinese restaurant, Happy China. People need to stop going to these overrated and boring restaurants in Athens. It's time people experienced Happy China's buffet because their low prices, their atmosphere, and their service all get a C- rating on Yelp.

The prices are low cost but there is SO much food. First of all, a meal is only $4.99 there.. That means you can go through the buffet 10 times and still only pay $4.99 for your entire meal. Sure you may not fit into your pants when you walk out, but you will be full for days. There are even 4 different serving bars, 2 for hot foods, 1 for cold food, and 1 for dessert. The chicken and egg rolls may upset your stomach/make you nauseous but that is completely normal, you just need a few practice visits to the restaurant.

As many of you know Athens really is known for their 5star and diverse restaurants. But people still need to give these 2 star restaurants a chance, they have so much to offer too.. sure their food, atmosphere, and service may not be up to par but they do serve food. Happy China is the closest thing Athens has to real-authentic Chinese cuisine, despite it's low quality food, atmosphere, and service it is NOT to be avoided. It's located on Broad Street, so next time you're downtown don't go to those restaurants everyone's always talking about, go to Happy China!

Encomium Sample 2 (for class evaluation purposes)

While libraries have been around for many years, in today's society they are extremely under-appreciated, and are not given the praise they deserve. Public libraries have provided everyone from kids to adults with resources

for a long time, however, many of these magnificent sources of knowledge are dying out because people are forgetting how useful they truly are. Since the creation of the internet, libraries have received unfair treatment because people would rather search something up on Google and hope they have accessed a credible source, than go to their local library and have a guaranteed credible source. Libraries have always been a place you could rely on to find resources for school papers, but they also have other resources that can be fun for everyone too. Libraries are underrated because people do not take advantage of the movies for rent, the equipment for rent, and the impact they have on our historical record.

I believe that libraries are treated unfairly, because they have so many amazing resources that people disregard simply because they are viewed as old fashioned. Libraries are viewed as being for old people because the younger generations have the internet, and they feel like libraries are inefficient and useless. People do not see a need for libraries because they have cell phones and laptops that have access to the internet. Because kids today have access to the internet, they feel like libraries no longer have a real purpose. Young people today are taught that they have access to all the information in the world, and because of that they feel that libraries are now unnecessary (Jackson, Peter). In the same vein, many people feel that because they have all of the information they could possibly need on the internet it is inefficient to do research in libraries because it is a waste of time to look through all of the books in libraries. Most people also feel that libraries are useless now because a lot of information of important findings and events are now stored online, and because they are stored online, we no longer need to keep a physical record of that information anymore.

There are also many reasons why libraries are important and underappreciated. There are many reasons that libraries are incredible resources that are undervalued, and reasons why more people should be taking advantage of all that they have to offer. Libraries contain a multitude of valuable resources, with credible information that can be used for many things, from research papers to broaden your perspective of the world. When going to the library there is no need to worry that the source you are gathering information from was written by an author, who did not research well. Every book in libraries went through revision to be checked to make sure it was created appropriately, and this is why more people in schools need to take more advantage of the libraries. Another reason libraries should be more appreciated is because they have more than just books. There are a lot of different things you can rent in libraries from movies to equipment like VHS players and slide projectors (Bowen, Mercury). These resources are even more forgotten than the books that libraries are known for. Renting movies can be a great economic choice for people who do not have the money to pay for all of the different streaming platforms you need to have today, just to see some older movies. I also think that there is not enough emphasis on what libraries do for maintaining our records of the past. Many people miss out on all of the other amazing resources that libraries have that aren't books, like movies and equipment.

I believe that libraries deserve more credit for all of the resources they have, and the service of maintaining our record of history by just having the large resources of information about the past that it contains. Libraries deserve better, and more people need to realize how useful they are.

Sample Encomium

Attention-Getting Device: In 1942, FDR marred the United States' reputation by beginning an internment program for Japanese Americans, allegedly as a "protective measure." On November 18, 2015, Roanoake mayor David Bowers argued that "President Franklin D. Roosevelt felt compelled to sequester Japanese foreign nationals after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and it appears that the threat of harm to America from ISIS now is just as real and serious as that from our enemies then." Bower is not alone. He and others have noted that refugees pose a terroristic threat – inviting the enemy into our own hopes.

The attention getting device offers an opportunity to include a citation.

Thesis: What you're putting into the essay. But in spite of the negative publicity that migrants and refugees have received in the United States, I will argue that these people deserve to be rescued – from political violence and from the violence of language.

Purpose: What your audience should get out of the essay. By the end of this essay, I hope my audience will reconsider how they talk about 'refugees,' and begin to approach this important topic with compassion rather than fear.

Preview: In this essay, I will address two misconceptions that will "rescue" the emigrating refugee from the unfair reputation that they have received: first, I will address the false belief that refugees are or may be terrorists, and second, that the incorrect assumption that refugees are "swarms" of people who threaten America's borders.

Main Point 1: Refugees from other nations are very unlikely to be terrorists.

- Evidence that shows people describing refugees as terrorists, threat, etc.
- Evidence that shows why these descriptions are false, exaggerated, etc.

Main Point 2: Characterizing refugees as "swarms" makes hatred toward minoritized migrants in the United States more likely

- Evidence that shows people describing refugees as "swarms" alongside rhetoric that describes how we need to secure our borders provokes public violence.
- Evidence that shows how this hurts, and does not help, the United States' relationship with other nations.

[These main points would be developed in greater detail in a fully-written-out encomium essay, and would also be supported by external evidence cited in the works cited/bibliography.]

Review: In this essay, I have addressed two misconceptions: first, that refugees are or may be terrorists, and second, that characterizing refugees as "swarms" helps us to secure our borders.

Purpose: I have done so in the hopes of quelling irrational fears about refugees, and to urge an alternative way of thinking about these people in need.

Thesis: As I have argued, these people deserve to be rescued – from the violence of the Middle East and from the violence of Americans' language.

AGD: As for David Bowers, on November 20th, 2015 he apologized for his earlier remarks, saying that he did not anticipate the international attention that his comments would bring. But Bowers' apology is not enough. What we need is fewer apologies and more compassion – as well as a willingness to see refugees for what they are: people.

Like the introduction, the conclusion is an opportunity for 1-2 citations supporting your argument.

SHORT PAPER 2: ANNOTATION ASSIGNMENT

For this assignment, students will read and annotate an academic essay from rhetorical studies. You should write up your short paper in the style of a detailed annotation that should answer the following questions. The answers may be bulleted or numbered. Students should focus on fully answering each of the questions rather than providing a narrative flow. This exercise is intended to model (1) the practice of reading academic essays in rhetorical studies and (2) creating notes and annotations to help recall the important or salient points.

- Please keep your short paper 2 assignment to no more than 2 pages (not including the bibliography of works cited).
- Please do not turn in a marked up copy of the academic article.
- Please number your answers. Additionally, I would like folks to either restate each numbered question as part of the answer or to begin each answer with the numbered question in their document. This will help your graders to keep track of which question you are answering.

Requirements/Prompts to Answer:

1. **What is the central claim/assertion/thesis of the essay?** This statement should reflect the author's core assertion about how rhetoric functions in the cases described in the article.
2. **What is the author's definition of rhetoric? Based on context clues and citations in the essay, how is rhetoric being defined?**** Your answer should make clear why this definition is the best fit, possibly making reference to the way that the word rhetoric is used in the article. You may also want to draw upon the definitions of rhetoric we have considered over the semester and justify why this definition fits with the understanding of rhetoric provided in the essay.
3. **Based on the units we've considered in this class, how does the author understand rhetorical criticism? What is the ultimate purpose of the essay?** Your answer should make clear the unique advantage of doing criticism using rhetorical terminology. What does rhetorical criticism do? What should the reading audience of this article learn?
   1. According to the author, the value of rhetorical analysis is that it …
      1. Explains how persuasion works in the context of [gun violence; conspiracy theories; twitter celebrities]
      2. Unveils the way that power works in spaces that are supposedly equal, accessible, and democratic.

3. Allows us to understand the effects/impacts of speech for a specific audience.

4. **What elements of the author's theory or analysis are uniquely rhetorical? Are there any specific key terms or words that mark the theory or contribution that qualify it as "rhetoric"?** I recommend looking for the specialized rhetoric vocabulary in the article that resonate with or appear in the content from the textbook or the supplemental readings for the course. Make sure you draw attention to the rhetorical terms that appear in the article and then explain how they fit into a larger conception or definition of rhetoric (such as that provided in question 2).

5. **Who is the author in conversation with? Who are the people that the author cites the most, builds upon, or takes issue with?**** Look at who the author is citing to build their argument about rhetoric. Whose work do they build upon in the sense of adding concepts, terminology, or detail to an existing argument or literature? Alternatively, who do they disagree with and whose ideas do they wish to revise?

6. **What does the author contribute to this conversation? What is it that they bring in the way of a new idea, concept, terminology, or kind of analysis?** What is the difference that this article seeks to make in terms of adding new knowledge to a conversation about rhetoric? Is it a theoretical addition, in the sense of new concepts, terms, ideas, or frameworks? Is it a topical addition, in the sense that a set of existing concepts, terms, ideas, and frameworks may be stretched to explain new cases that have not been heretofore considered?

7. **What are other key terms not already mentioned in annotations 1-6 that are especially important to understanding this essay? Why were they important to the overall meaning of the essay?** Without repeating earlier questions, look to words that were challenging to you in your reading but which seemed important for understanding the overall meaning of the article. What additional terms beyond those already mentioned did you need to look up? How are they related to the central understanding of rhetoric in the essay?

8. **How might the essay help us to understand circumstances beyond those described in the essay?** Draw upon a specific example that this framework might help to illuminate that goes beyond what is contained in the essay. If you were to draw upon the ideas of rhetoric developed in the essay, what concrete cases might you draw upon? What kinds of other real-world examples did this article remind you of?

these are good candidates to cite other articles to answer this question, for instance, from the bibliography of the essay you are annotating. Please note that the citations you are seeking may be cited in the articles for the assignment, so use the references/bibliography of the article you have selected as a resource when answering these questions.

In this assignment, you should plan to cite 3-5 sources. These sources should be drawn from what the author of the article cites as support or evidence for their claims. These citations appear in the bibliography of the

essays listed below. It would be most helpful for establishing the definition of rhetoric, rhetorical concepts, and the conversation entered. Of course, sources may be cited for any of the questions so long as they are relevant and help to answer the question. Please do not cite sources arbitrarily or "just because," there must be a good reason for the citation.

Please select one of the essays from the list below. These essays' central contribution regards rhetoric and rhetorical theory, and are published in journals recognized for contributions to rhetorical studies. One detailed annotation is also provided on the following page.

Please note that you must select one article from this list for your annotation. Annotations of articles that do not appear on this list will receive a grade of "0."

Kehrberg, Rhetoric of Twitter Fandom	Rood, Our Tears Are Not Enough
Kelley-Romano, Conspiracy on U.S. TV	Stahl, A Clockwork War

Example of an Article Annotation.

Michael Lechuga (2020) "Mapping migrant vernacular discourses: Mestiza consciousness, nomad thought, and Latina/o/x migrant movement politics in the United States," Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 13:3, 257-273.

1. **What is the central claim/assertion/thesis of the essay?** Michael Lechuga makes the assertion that the tensions between Latinas/o/x immigrants and the US come in three forms. With its emphasis upon the movements of national identity, migrant identity, the fear anxiety associated with criminality, this essay is not a quantitative stance on immigration or the rhetoric that is seen in politics. It is an analysis of how the migrant vernacular has now to be decrypted to better understand how rigid state borders have impacted their identity and how they navigate the space they occupy. It presents the case that the act of immigration is a fundamental right that anyone should have. That the way in which we close and shut our borders is rooted in a fundamental idea of a nationalist view towards the world in the US. The essay aims to help enlighten the audience that being in a country state with borders is not the natural way. In a culture that has historically embraced nomadism, new forms of nomadism are emergent.

2. **What is the author's definition of rhetoric? Based on context clues and citations in the essay, how is rhetoric being defined?**** Rhetoric is the tool that searches for the most effective means of illustrating your point of view or making the most persuasive argument that moves people. The author is defining rhetoric as an art of communication, that rhetoric must go beyond a monocultural thought process. Rhetoric must get beyond the rigidity of one language with one mode. Rhetoric must be versatile and adaptive, it is not stagnant. The nomad has no one place, no one identity, no one way to think, the nomad can be bilingual, polyamorous, it does not matter. Rhetoric becomes not just the language as the mode, it is the thought, the action, the touch. It

becomes fluid because in the nomad state there are no barriers. Rhetoric must transcend language and ascend to ubiquity in fluidity.

3. **Based on the units we've considered in this class, how does the author understand rhetorical criticism? What is the ultimate purpose of the essay?** Lechuga sees rhetorical criticism as a means of giving the nomadic view more latitude. Lechuga also aims to express the agency that rhetorical criticism gives migrant populations. It allows the critique to become omnipotent. They are not embedded in their own truth of the nation-state, or in the nomad. They are beyond both; they are outside their own prejudices and preconceived notions based on their story and the story written. Lechuga says "It- gives agency to those communities on the margins by studying how they negotiate identity through vernacular discourse, not just the domination discourses". Rhetorical criticism takes away the idea of the author as the authority. It takes the power away from the dominating discourse, it gives rise to the discourse that surrounds what identity is and how nomads are negotiating it.

4. **What elements of the author's theory or analysis are uniquely rhetorical? Are there any specific key terms or words that mark the theory or contribution that qualify it as "rhetoric"?** What struck me as most overtly rhetorical about this essay were the stories from Anzaldua and the statement by Guizar. It was through stories of people that we saw the deeper meaning of writing this essay. It was the voices that had been subjected to hate crimes, ostracization, to being put in boxes, under labels, when they were never contained. Another rhetorical characteristic of this essay was the way that Lechuga seamlessly moved from subjective evidence to an analysis of systems of government, which I found to be flawless.

5. **Who is the author in conversation with? Who are the people that the author cites the most, builds upon, or takes issue with?**** Lechuga says "This study is informed by a rich body of scholarships on vernacular discourse". In his text he writes about the most critical of those scholarships being one that is producing the greatest ripples in the water being one that actively makes critiques of those that dominate the discourse that constructs and marginalizes the identity of Latina/o/x communities. Throughout the essay Lechuga does not blatantly say, 'You, the authoritarians need this education" and that "NPNF argues that migration is a human right." Lechuga takes issue with the presidents that entered and exited the office and done nothing to remediate the issue of ICE, of the prison state that we have created.

6. **What does the author contribute to this conversation? What is it that they bring in the way of a new idea, concept, terminology, or kind of analysis?** Throughout the essay Lechuga builds on mestiza consciousness and the idea of NPNF. Lechuga powerfully enters the conversation with a quote from Anzaldua about what being a nomad is. It is as though she is describing a rhythmic dance, tiptoeing from one movement to another. When, it is describing an entire change of oneself to conform to another culture because you as an entity are not a stagnant puddle of muck, but ubiquitous in life and culture. By raising the idea of rhetorical criticism as a

voice for the voiceless to light, he also emphasizes that rhetoric must goes beyond the Burkean definition of rhetoric as symbolic action, or as a universal identification among all individuals, which does not take into account the unique modes of communication and lived experience that characterizes migrant communities.

7. **What are other key terms not already that are especially important to understanding this essay? Why were they important to the overall meaning of the essay?** (1) *Mestizaje* or mestiza consciousness describes "an orientation to multiple spaces and multiple possibilities that span time, language, and ideology." As opposed to a logic-centric approach to rhetoric, in which words and arguments convey meaning that is assumed to be universally available to an audience, this concept explains "how power is layered onto bodies through affection, through institutions, and of course through language." It is a theory of speech but also of feeling, emotion, and lived experience that aims for "coalitional activism that encourages bodies to occupy spaces of contradiction as a resistance to white supremacy." (2) Vernacular, which may be understood as the linguistic and rhetorical expressions of a particular community. Everything about the Latina/o/x culture is their identity, yet they so easily slip in and own to appease the cultures around them.

8. **How might the essay help us to understand circumstances beyond those described in the essay?** If we look at the world and stop seeing it as lines, ownership, borders, categories of people, labels, compartmentalization of human beings we can maybe see each other. See each other.. By using rhetorical criticism as a means of depowering the authoritative state and empowering the minorities we are one step closer to social equality. This essay really sought to inform about what it means to be nomadic. The fluidness of the body, the mind, the energy that allows someone to seamlessly transpose themselves through worlds of cultures and people. It showed how our rigidity as US citizens limits us from embracing, acknowledging, and learning about others in a meaningful way. We have such a disconnect from movement, identity, culture, bodies, emotions, even our own loved ones. We see differences, not what brings us together. Lechuga wrote about how immigrants are caught in constant states of fear, anxiety, not being secure in a homeland, and how can we not relate? This isn't even our land, yet we prevent others from moving here as the majority of us did as settlers.

SHORT PAPER 3: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

This 2 page statement should clearly answer the <u>research questions</u> below regarding rhetorical communication (see below). The following bullets provide the prompt for the essay. Students may choose to treat their answers to each bulleted prompt as separate paragraphs in the final essay.

Please note that this assignment is asking you to answer all of the questions below. You do not have to format the answers as separate paragraphs, although I recommend that organizational strategy to feature your answers to the questions.

- *Introduction:* After your Attention-Getting Device (AGD), provide the thesis and purpose of your rhetorical analysis. What new observations does your analysis reveal? What is the benefit, profit, or take-away of having completed this analysis? Then, provide a preview statement that outlines how the rest of the essay will proceed.
- *<u>What is rhetoric?</u>* Cite a key definition drawn from the course and/or academic sources, and explain what this definition means.
- *<u>Explain a core rhetorical concept</u>.* Connect this definition to a concept (or concepts) drawn from the course. Why and how do they offer a helpful lens through which to understand contemporary rhetoric?
- *<u>Show how the concept illuminates a case.</u>* Provide an example of current or contemporary rhetoric that illustrates this rhetorical concept 'in action'. Tell us enough about the case to understand the relevance of the rhetorical concept, and then show how the concept illuminates our understanding of this example.
- *Conclusion:* Gesture beyond the case at hand to explain why your rhetorical analysis might be useful more generally or in application to a wider set of topics. What else about public communication might an analysis like this one reveal?

It is important that you make use of clear organization and topic sentences in your writing. Please indicate which question you are answering in the header of your document (in addition to identifying information like student name, class, date), offer a prospective answer as a thesis statement, and briefly discuss researched support for the thesis. For additional writing and organizational advice for this assignment, please consult the following document: Additional Guidance for Critical Writing.

Citations

Short papers should contain (1) in text citations (guidelines for in-text citations can be found here: Citations for Critical Writing) and (2) a works cited section at the end of the document containing 3-5 properly

formatted citations (more information about [MLA](), [APA](), and [Chicago]() can be found at the corresponding links).

How to Organize a Short-Form Rhetorical Analysis, Paragraph by Paragraph

The optimal organization for this paper is a <u>logically dependent structure</u>, meaning that each paragraph built toward a larger argument. This approach is modeled below. However you decide to organize the paper, it must coordinate a thesis that advances how rhetoric and rhetorical concepts help to explain a given topic/object/artifact/event/text/image with topic sentences that flow through the entire document.

Paragraph 1: Thesis. Articulate a clear thesis statement, purpose statement and preview for your short essay.

- The ***thesis statement*** should connect an idea of rhetoric to a concrete instance of rhetoric as it has been discussed in this class.
  - ○ **(e.g.)** *[this idea of rhetoric and/or a specific rhetorical concept] helps to explain the [impacts, effects, strategies, motives, or power hierarchies] at work [in this specific instance, case study, image, artifact, etc.]*. However it is phrased, this statement should unfold over the course of the next several paragraphs.
    - ▪ **(e.g.)** Kenneth Burke's dramatistic ratios, such as between scene and agent, can help us to understand the rhetorical choices made by courtroom speakers in *US v. Texas* (2021) and the motives of the plaintiff and defendant in the case.
    - ▪ **(e.g.)** The concept of *anamorphosis*, drawn from theories of *visual rhetoric*, can help us to explain the dynamic scenes and narrative structure of the film *The Green Knight*.
  - ○ *How have we understood the idea of "rhetoric" in this class?* As speech, persuasion, ideological signs, symbols, and representations, narratives, arguments, visual rhetorics, public address, settler representations and disavowals, instances of public secrecy, or digital rhetoric.
- The ***purpose statement*** should explain what is gained or better understood by describing this artifact using rhetorical concepts. This is a statement about why this analysis is important, urgent, or deserving of our attention. It may speak to the ethical stakes of the analysis or the reasons why people would benefit from a rhetorical perspective.
- The ***preview statement*** should give us a sense of how the rest of the essay will unfold. Given the progression below, it might read: *first, I will offer a nuanced definition of rhetoric and explain the features of [a specific rhetorical concept]. Then I will describe how [the rhetorical concept] helps us to understand [your case study, speech, text, image, etc.]*

Paragraph 2-3: What is rhetoric? Cite a key definition drawn from the course and/or academic sources, and explain what this definition means. At the most general level, we have discussed rhetoric as ==persuasion, representation, and hierarchies of power.== These are themes that stretch across multiple chapters.

In addition to the unit-specific definitions below, I have also uploaded a separate document that contains some

more *Definitions of Rhetoric.* *For reference, you might consider the following pairings, which have been recurrent throughout the class. Feel free to return to the lecture outline document and/or agenda document, which is also where these definitions are drawn from.* We have also more specifically defined rhetoric in the following ways:

- **Classical (Greek) Rhetoric**
  - Plato: "Rhetoric moves the soul by means of speech"
  - Aristotle: "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic (or philosophy) / the available means of persuasion in any given situation."
- **Sign and Symbol.** As-persuasion/public address: "something that happens in or as a speech, and it relies upon the speaker's conscious choices, their historical circumstances, and the timeliness of the moment at which speeches delivered."
  - Burke: Rhetoric as identification is "the way that speech unifies and divides a collective public audience." Rhetoric as symbolic action "occurs around symbols and relies upon the idea of consubstantiality or the creation of a sameness or likeness, between different members of a group based upon a shared and symbolic point of reference, rather than just persuading with the right words."
- **Ideology and Myth:** Rhetoric describes the way that any given sign can acquire an additional meaning or signification, contributing to a shared system of belief that supports an ideology.
- **Agency:** Rhetoric describes any subject's relative "capacity to act." In the case of a speech, for instance, "agency" may reside with the audience (who acts on the speech), the speaker (who compels the action), and/or the text (the speech itself which has a specific and repeatable kind of force).
- **Persona:** Rhetoric is public address or speech addressed with an audience in mind or that is implied by the act of address.
- **Speech Act:** Rhetoric is a performative utterance that has specific consequences either at the moment of the utterance or at some distance from it.
- **Narrative:** Rhetoric is the arrangement of forms in language, image, and speech to create recognizable genres. Forms provide a recognizable logical order, are repeatable (such as a sequence or a figure of speech), and are ambivalent to the ethical or political goals that they serve.
- **Argument:** Rhetoric, when organized as an argument, is both a thing (such as a logical form) and a relationship (for example, as between an affirmative and a negative position, or between a defendant and a plaintiff).
- **Visual Rhetoric:** Rhetoric consists of the persuasive and presentational symbolism of the circulating image that acts as a source of shared culture and identification for a given public. Visual rhetoric may also be an iconic image, an image event, monumental rhetoric, or body rhetoric.
- **The Rhetorical Situation:** Rhetoric is a "fitting response" to an exigency that is addressed to an audience (or audiences) while navigating specific constraints. It is a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if

discourse, introduced in the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence

- **The Settler Situation:** Rhetoric consists of the colonizer's patterns of disavowal that project that threat of colonization onto a foreign other who allegedly threatens the colonizer with their colonization, and which provides the colonizer with a justification to perpetuate colonial governance.
- **Secrecy Rhetoric:** Rhetoric consists of the ways that "we know that we do not know" or the cues, patterns, and behaviors that alert a person or public, after the fact, to the existence of some secret.
- **Digital Rhetoric:** The language we use and the practices that have become invisible/normal concerning technology, in which the words and techniques we use to monitor and model human behavior have destructive public consequences.

Paragraph 2-3: Connect this definition to a concept (or concepts) drawn from the course. Why and how do they offer a helpful lens through which to understand contemporary rhetoric? These concepts are considerably more plentiful across the chapters of the book. What is the specific concept related to the larger idea of rhetoric you have selected for this final essay? What is particularly interesting, illuminating, or important about what this concept explains at a general level? If there are 'tenets' or components of this concept what are those tenets and how are they defined? (e.g. the four criteria for assessing visual rhetoric in Finnegan's "Visual Modes of Public Address."

Paragraph 3-5: Provide an example of current or contemporary rhetoric that illustrates this rhetorical concept 'in action'. Provide a detailed context about the case to understand the relevance of the rhetorical concept, and then show how the concept illuminates our understanding of this example. You may want to devote one paragraph to the context of your selected topic/object/artifact/text/image and another to the application of the rhetorical concept from the previous paragraphs to this topic. Here are some framing questions for the "context" you might consider. You can answer one or all of these:

- What was the emergency or problem or situation to which this artifact/object responds?
- For whom was the object/artifact/text staged? Who was it meant for? Who consumed it? Did it get a lot of attention?
- What were the limitations of communicating this message? What limitations did the creators of the message face? What kinds of choices were made in the creation of this message?

Here is a more condensed version of this assignment organized by prompts for each section.

Introduction

- Thesis: What are you arguing? What is the novel connection between rhetorical concept(s) and the example that you are advancing in this essay?

- Purpose: What's the significance of the example? What new thing do we learn by applying a rhetorical lens to it?
- Preview: How will the paper unfold in first, second, third order?

Body 1: Rhetorical Concept

- What is the general conception of rhetoric that you are advancing (persuasion, representation, hierarchies of power) and is there a definition of rhetoric offered in the textbook or by one of the sources in the "definition" document that might support this understanding?
- What is the specific concept of rhetoric that fits under the heading of the general definition you just offered? What keyword(s) are you drawing upon from our class that you intend to apply or examine in the light of the case study at hand?

Body 2: Rhetorical Context

- What do we need to know about this case and how it unfolded in order to understand the application/ analysis to follow? What was the public significance of the event? Who created/delivered the rhetorical address/text? Who was its audience? What was it responding to? What happened immediately before and after the event/text/speech under consideration? What was going on more generally in public or political culture at the time?

Body 3: Rhetorical Example

- Systematically apply the concept from the second bullet of Body 1 to the example you have selected, citing directly from the example (in this case, the words of the speech). What is/are the concept(s), and how would you know it when you saw it? What kinds of evidence are appropriate to consider when claiming that the rhetorical concept(s) are operative? What evidence is there of the concept(s) being used? Restated in your own words, how does the concept relate to the evidence you have just provided?

Conclusion

- What does the application of the rhetorical concept(s) to the example teach us more generally? How might it apply to other examples other than the one that you have just considered?
- Where have we been in this essay? (Review)
- What was the point of the analysis for your reader? (Purpose)
- What was your core argument, in the most condensed phrasing possible? (Thesis)

Finally, I'll draw on some examples as illustrations, although you should pick your own pairing of a concept

with a case study. The idea is for you to show us that you have gained an understanding of at least one of the rhetorical concepts we have discussed and are able to think about how it explains an instance of persuasion, representation, or hierarchical power relations.

- Rhetoric is a mode of strategic **representation**, which uses written and visual symbols in order to convey a message to an audience. **Visual rhetoric**, for example, can be understood as the use of representations to convey a message to a public audience using a strategic arrangement of element.
- One concept that falls under this heading is the **"image event."** The image event describes the crafting of a public performance for purposes of media circulation, such as a protest, demonstration, or movement that makes for "good pictures" and therefore represents the importance of a social issue to a wider community or audience. An image event also provokes thinking about the authenticity of the performance/demonstration/movement in question precisely because they are designed to be 'pictured'.
- One example of this concept in action is **the "extinction rebellion" demonstration** on the Thames, where activists staged a house floating down a river to illustrate the effects of climate change. You would then show how it is designed for 'good pictures' and provokes questions about authenticity.

Another example, focused on a speech:

- Rhetoric is a strategy of **persuasion**, where a speaker crafts a message for an audience with some idea of how they would like this audience to think, feel, and act in response. One broad framework that is useful for understanding rhetoric as persuasion is **"the rhetorical situation,"** which helps us to puzzle out the different elements that collaborate to give a speech its force and meaning.
- A rhetorical situation is composed minimally of an **"exigence,"** an **"audience"** and **"constraints."** The exigence is the "imperfection marked by urgency" which is the problem to which the speaker responds and seeks to resolve. The audience is those people to whom the speech is addressed who have the capacity to act in order to resolve or reduce the urgency of the exigence. Constraints describe the limitations upon the speaker and the speech which must be navigated in order for persuasion to have its intended effect.
- **A speech by Barack Obama** such as the 2008 "Yes We Can" address can be explained as an intentionally crafted persuasive address by attending to the "problem" to which he responded (i.e., the **exigence**: a recession in the wake of the Bush presidency, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, etc), the **audiences** to whom his speech was addressed (moderate Americans and the specific constituencies named in the speech itself), and **constraints** (such as the fact that "yes we can" was used in previous campaigns that were not successful, or that it was adapted from other movement leaders like Dolores Huerta [Si se puede]).

Selecting a Topic: Like the encomium assignment, you pick your topic. You may want to think about your

topic *first* based on its importance or exemplarity, and *then* work your way through rhetorical concepts that might help us to understand it. If you are struggling to find a topic for your rhetorical analysis, you might consider looking on AmericanRhetoric.com, which offers MANY examples from famous public figures and from films.

Sample Short Paper 3 Assignments: Below you will find three examples of this essay fully written out. They are meant to provide some models beyond the step-by-step paragraph layout provided above.

- Class Sample 1
- Class Sample 2
- Class Sample 3

Additional Resources for Short Paper 3

- Writing Discussion 1: Rhetorical Analysis (discussed the assignment description above)
- Writing Discussion 2: Organizing Your Analysis.
- Reverse Outlinining and student-prompted examples of topics for this essay.
- Writing Discussion 3: Revising and Editing Short Paper 3

Class Sample 1

On January 29, 2021 in Brussels, Belgium hundreds of Members of European Parliament rose to their feet, joined hands, and broke into song for what was perhaps the most consequential rendition of Auld Layne Syne in European history. Moments before, the European Parliament had ratified the terms of the United Kingdom's withdraw from the European Union, ending 47-years of British membership in the organization (Payne, 2020). This paper examines the moment from a rhetorical lens, arguing that the rhetorical concepts of the second persona and eavesdropping audience can be used to better understand the political motivations for the European Parliaments singing of the Scottish folk song. To this end, the paper is divided into a definition for rhetoric, explanation of how this definition relates to the concepts of the second persona and eavesdropping audiences, and exploration of how the singing of Auld Layne Syne can be better understood by viewing it as an example of these concepts in action.

First, for the purposes of this paper the definition of rhetoric developed by Kenneth Burke shall be utilized. According to Burke, rhetoric "is the manipulation of men's beliefs for political ends….the basic function of rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (Burke, 1969). Thus, rhetoric can be understood as the use of language by human actors to advance ideological objectives by inculcating attitudes within others or effectuating the action of others. So long as the message remains intelligible, rhetoric can occur through any medium, and can be certainly communicated and analyzed through the medium of a song such as Auld Layne Syne.

This definition connects directly to the concept of second persona and the eavesdropping audience. Simply put, to understand rhetoric as the utilization of language to mold attitudes and incite action is necessarily to presume that rhetoric cannot occur without an audience capable. While their multiple audiences to which rhetoric may be addressed, the first penitent to this case is the second persona, or the implied audience who a rhetor is targeting his address towards directly. The other is the eavesdropping audience. This audience is one that the rhetor wants to hear their message while explicitly targeting the message at another group. This is typically done to limit the either limit the agency of the eavesdropping audience, or to acknowledge and empower them. Pundits, elected officials, and other political actors regularly address the second persona and the eavesdropping actors in the rhetoric, as evidenced by examining the signing of Auld Layne Sayne.

These concepts of audience concepts provide a lens to better understand the European Parliaments purpose for singing Auld Layne Sang after voting to approve the terms of the United Kingdoms withdrawal from the European Union. To be certain, the rendition of Auld Layne Syne is an act of rhetoric. Despite what reporting on the seemed to imply, the signing was not spontaneous, as evinced by MEP's circulating to one another lyric sheets, but instead can best be understood by being viewed as pre-planned act of political messaging targeted towards the British public, the second persona in this scenario, and Scotland, the eaves-dropping audience. For those Britons watching the proceeding, both who did and did not vote from Brexit, the somber singing of Auld Layne Sing was meant to cast the moment as one of celebration and instead frame moment as the tragic end of a period of cooperation and camaraderie. In doing so, the rhetorical action accomplished a political objective by subverting the attempt of Nigel Farage and his Eurosceptic UKIP delegation, who had moments before stormed out of the building in a flurry of boorishly gleeful flag waving, to cast the moment as one of celebration and instead framed the vote as the tragic end of a period of cooperation and camaraderie. Perhaps more interestingly, the selection of a quintessentially Scottish song written partially in 18th-century Scots can also be understood as disguised overture to the Scotland, the eaves-dropping audience, who's public and ruling pro-EU, anti-UK[1] Scottish National Party continues to openly muse about attempting a second independence referendum in the aftermath of the Brexit vote (Sturgeon, 2021).

In conclusion, Burke's definition of rhetoric and the rhetorical concepts of the second persona and eavesdropping audience allows a lens by which to better understand the singing of Auld Layne Syne. Applying this lens reveals the singing as a complex political calculation designed to simultaneously undermine UKIP and encourage the SNP, rather than as, the cursory observer may assume, a spontaneous, and perhaps slightly frivolous, symbolic bidding of farewell to the United Kingdom.

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1. While this is admittedly an oversimplification of the SNP's relationship with the United Kingdom, a detailed discussion of the SNP's politics and positions towards secessionism is beyond the scope of this paper.

Class Sample 2

While many understand rhetoric as simply the art of persuading an individual or group of people, it can be better understood as "the art of ruling the minds of men" (Plato, 2018). In this short paper, I will argue that rhetoric may be understood as that rhetoric is the language of colonizers and how media coverage on events such as those in Jerusalem may perpetuate coloniality and provide the colonizer with a justification to perpetuate their colonial governance. By the end of this paper, my reader should understand what rhetoric is, and how colonial communication animates western media coverage on the recent attacks in Jerusalem. To do this, I'll first explain how I define rhetoric, following with a connection to colonial communication and Dr. Lechuga's "incomunicable", and finally closing with an outline of how this plays out in my given example.

To begin, I will define rhetoric through the lens of colonialism, in that rhetoric is a collection of renounced patterns that project the threat of colonization onto the colonized other, while providing the colonizer justification to perpetuate their colonial governance (Hallsby, 2021). This means that for the colonizer, rhetoric is another weapon they use to perpetuate their colonial power in a way that is often hidden, objective and subtle because of their continued rejection of responsibility. Rhetoric is used here to bring power to the colonizer, while bringing fear and oppression to the colonized.

The previous definition of rhetoric is connected to Dr. Michael Lechuga's concept of colonial communication and "incomunicable". Colonial communication is defined as a "colonizing group [that] distributes and maintains control over the political, social, and economic hierarchies" (Lechuga, 2021). Furthermore, "incomunicable" is a concept that is used to refer to the product of colonial communication (Lechuga, 2021). When rhetoric is used to maintain control over a group of people and structures of power, rhetoric is being used to dictate what is acceptable or not acceptable, what is allowed or not allowed, in order to keep the colonial power in place. These concepts are helpful in understanding the aforementioned definition of rhetoric because they provide a tangible way of how colonial rhetoric has a clear purpose, which is to maintain the systems of power of the colonial government, while maintaining the colonized position below.

Over the weekend, Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank of Palestine has been the target of massive raids and attacks by Israeli officers due to the protesting of the planned eviction of several Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. These past few days have left hundreds injured, multiple dead, and the entire world heartbroken and ashamed of Israeli response to the peaceful protesters. While these events have been an example of many things, including irresponsible US foreign aid, continued violations of human rights, and the exacerbation of the Israeli apartheid, it has also been an example of colonial communication. Many western news media outlets have been reporting day in and day out about the details of what is going on on the ground. Through these media coverage, I will highlight how rhetoric as colonial communication is prevalent due to it rendering the Palestinian people and their struggle "incomunicable".

In an article published today in the New York Times, the subtitle of Kingsley and Kershner (2021) report indicate the prevalence of colonial rhetoric. They say "clashes between the Israeli police and Palestinian protesters at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem" (Kingsley and Kershner, 2021). In this subtitle, the word "clashes"

is a clear indication of the objectivity of colonial communication in that the word suggests that the events are strictly two sided, and that both sides are responsible for the attacks. However, the fact of the matter is that Israeli forces attacked the Palestinians, and when using the word attacked, it is clear who is responsible for the event. Another example of this is also from the New York Times where they titled their article "Hundreds of Palestinians Hurt After Israeli Police Enter Aqsa Mosque" (The New York Times, 2021). Again, the word "enter" is used objectively, but dismisses the violence and power that Israeli forces held during that incident. Here, it is clear that rhetoric is being used to dismiss the true nature of the events happening in Jerusalemn against the Palestinian people and their land, and it is being used to maintain the position of the Israeli colonial government, who continues to attack, raid and destroy Palestinian land, but remains unnaffected and disavowed.

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Class Sample 3

'Snitches get stitches', a phrase that most people know means say what you know to someone and suffer the consequences. Secrets play a large part in secrecy rhetoric, whether it be keeping them or exposing them. Secrecy rhetoric is a type of rhetoric that many people encounter on a daily basis whether it be in their interaction or the media they consume. In this paper, I will define secrecy rhetoric, discuss the concept of surveillance in regards to secrecy rhetoric, and close by relating surveillance and secrecy rhetoric to the 2016 film *Snowden*.

To begin, secrecy rhetoric is defined as "rhetoric that consists of the ways that 'we know that we don't know' or the cues, patterns, and behaviors that alert a person or public, after the fact, to the existence of some secrets (Hallsby, 2021). What this definition means is that rhetoric is the actions taken to reveal secrets to those who

are un aware of the secret. One key concept of secrecy rhetoric is the concept of surveillance which is the act of observing an interaction or behavior by a nonparticipant in the action (Hallsby, 2021).

Surveillance is one of the key concepts to understand in secrecy rhetoric. It also is helpful in understanding contemporary rhetoric in a few ways. As stated before, surveillance is the act of observing an interaction or behavior by a nonparticipant in the action. This is definition makes it easier to understand the concept of persona in contemporary rhetoric for example, an audience that has seen something the speaker has done that revealed something about them but the audience remained silent it would be the fourth persona. Another way that surveillance helps to understand contemporary rhetoric is that rhetoric involves knowing the audience and persuading them which can be done with the help of secrets. This means that the speaker can keep secrets from the audience or they an let them in on a secret. To illustrate the concept of surveillance in action, let's look at the example of the 2016 film *Snowden*.

The 2016 film Snowden is about Edward Snowden, a former employee of the NSA who revealed classified information about the American government to the public. In the film Snowden surveils people through their devices without their knowledge and is disturbed by the extent of the capabilities of the NSA to watch almost everyone. In one scene in particular, Snowden is looking into his camera on his laptop and appears scared of who could be watching him. So, he decides to cover the lens with some tape, to not be surveilled (Stone, 2016, 0:55:26). The film depicts surveillance as the collection of secrets and private information by the NSA, this leads to Snowden becoming a whistleblower and revealing the secrets to the public by leaking the classified information to the Guardian (Greenwald, 2013). Throughout the whole film, Snowden is observing interactions as a nonparticipant, in other words surveilling them and obtaining their secrets.

To conclude, secrets in rhetoric play a large role in contemporary rhetoric by helping us to understand the how secrets are formed and how secrets are revealed. If there is one thing to take away from this paper it should be that surveillance is a key concept in helping us to understand rhetoric because it pertains to the relationship between the audience and the speaker. 'To know that we don't know' is the principle of secrets and whether they be secrets of the individual or the government, they are both relevant to secrecy rhetoric.

Work cited

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EXAM 1 STUDY GUIDE: CHAPTERS 1-5

The "Origins" of Rhetorical Theory

- *Terminology: rhetorike, metis, apate, kairos, episteme*

- *Terminology: forensic, epideictic, deliberative*

- *Terminology: ethos, pathos, logos*

- *Aristotle on virtue ethics*

- *Orality and literacy in ancient Greece*

- *Democratic reforms of ancient Greece*

- ***Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong, Aspasia***

- ***Gorgias, The Encomium of Helen***

- ***Isocrates, Against the Sophists***

The "Common" and the "Good"

- *Why were people "against the sophists" generally?*

- *Eudaimonia*

- ***Aristotle, Rhetoric***

- *What did the sophists believe?*

- *Plato's account of Rhetoric*

- **_Plato, Allegory of the Cave_**

- **_Simon Critchley, Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us_**

- **_W.E.B. Du Bois "the propaganda of history"_**

The Symbol

- _The terministic screen_

- _Reading: Rhetoric of Dehumanization_

- _The dramatistic pentad_

- _Identification_

- _Rhetoric as symbolic action_

- _Defining "symbol"_

- _Defining "symbol"_

- _Defining "propaganda"_

- _Rhetoric as Symbolic action_

The Sign

- _Defining "sign"_

- _Defining "representation"_

- _Terminology of symbol and sign_

- *The Demagogue*

- *Reading: Definition of Man*

- *Terminology of symbol and sign*

- *"Change the language, change the beliefs"*

- ***Kenneth Burke, "Definition of Man"***

- ***Anne Norton, "The President as Sign***

EXAM 2 STUDY GUIDE: CHAPTERS 6-9

Ideology

Ideographs
    Agency
    Persona
    Speech Acts
    Defining Ideology: What is it?
    Discourse and Representation
    Ideographs
    Agency
    Myth

Argument

Structures of Logical Dependency
    Warrants and the Toulmin Model
    Logical Fallacies (i.e. Fallacies of Reason)
    Warrants and the Toulmin Model
    Structures of Logical Dependency
    Defining Arguments: What are they?
    Logical Fallacies (Fallacies of Reason)

Narrative

Narrative Fidelity and Coherence
    Form and Genre
    Framing (tragic/comic/episodic/thematic)
    Johnson, "Walter White"
    Narrative Fidelity and Coherence
    Narrative Form and Genre

Framing (tragic/comic/episodic/thematic)
The Narrative Paradigm
Johnson, "Walter White"

Visual

Body Rhetoric
  Iconic Photographs
  Image Events
  Monumental Rhetoric
  Finnegan, "Visual Modes of Public Address"
  Elements of visual culture
  Reading Images
  Iconic Images/Photographs
  Image Events
  Body Rhetoric
  Finnegan, "Visual Modes ..."

EXAM 3 STUDY GUIDE: CHAPTERS 10-14

as a reminder to readers, there is no chapter 13 in this book. Instead, Reading Rhetorical Theory skips from chapter 12 (the secrecy situation) to chapter 14 (the digital situation)

The Rhetorical Situation

The exigency and the audience

  Context v. Situation

  Aristotle's definition of rhetoric

  The combination of different genres

  Different versions of the Rhetorical Situation

  Responses to the Rhetorical Situation

  The rhetorical exigence

  The rhetorical audience

  The rhetorical constraint

  Rhetorical Ecology

The Settler Situation

Aristotle and colonialism

  Land acknowledgements

  Components of the Settler Situation

  Terms to describe settlers/first peoples

  Disavowal definition

  Science fiction and settler colonialism

  Lechuga, *Incomunicable* lecture

  Lechuga on science fiction

  Tuck & Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" article

Secrecy Rhetoric

Anamorphosis

    Objective v. Subjective secrets

    Secretum and arcanum

    Surveillance and related terms

    Objective and Subjective secrets

    Leaking, whistleblowing, and stove-piping

    Panopticon

    The 'information bomb' (Stahl reading)

Digital Rhetoric

Skeuomorph

    Heuristics-as-Argumentative Fallacies

    Heuristics: The Hot Hand, Anchoring, AvailabilityDigital rhetoric's problems

    Defining digital rhetoric

    What is digital rhetoric?

    Levels of algorithmic rhetoric

    Tropes of Enormity in Digital Rhetoric

    Persuasion architecture (Tufecki)

    Woods, "Asking more of Siri and Alexa"

APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS OF RHETORIC

Plato: Rhetoric is "the art of moving the soul (psyche) by means of speech."

Aristotle: Rhetoric is "the faculty of discovering in any particular case all of the available means of persuasion.

Cicero: "Rhetoric is one great art comprised of five lesser arts: inventio, dispositio, elocutio, memoria, and pronunciatio." Rhetoric is "speech designed to persuade."

Quintillian: "Rhetoric is the art of the good man speaking well."

Francis Bacon: Rhetoric is the application of reason to imagination "for the better moving of the will."

George Campbell: [Rhetoric] is that art or talent by which discourse is adapted to its end. The four ends of discourse are to enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passion, and influence the will.

I.A. Richards: Rhetoric is the study of misunderstandings and their remedies.

Kenneth Burke: "Rhetoric is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic and continually born anew: the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols." ALSO: "Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric, and wherever there is rhetoric, there is meaning."

Richard Weaver: Rhetoric is that "which creates an informed appetition for the good."

Erika Lindemann: "Rhetoric is a form of reasoning about probabilities, based on Assumptions people share as members of a commununity."

Andrea Lunsford: "Rhetoric is the art, practice, and study of human communication."

Francis Christensen: "Grammar maps out the possible; rhetoric narrows the possible down to the desirable or effective." "The key question for rhetoric is how to know what is desirable."

Sonja and Karen Foss: "Rhetoric is an action human beings perform when they use symbols for the purpose of communicating with one another . . , [and it] is a perspective humans take that involves focusing on symbolic processes."

   1. **Boethius:** *Confessions* (Howell's translation)

Rhetoric treats of and discourses upon hypotheses, that is, questions with a multitude of surroundings in time and place, and if at any time it brings up a thesis, it uses it in connection with its hyposthesis. These are its surroundings: Who? What? Where? By whose help? Why? In what manner? At what time?

2. **James J. Murphy:** "One Thousand Neglected Authors"

A rhetorician is someone who provides his fellows with useful precepts or directions for organizing and presenting his ideas or feeling to them. (20)

3. **Marc Fumaroli:** "Rhetoric, Politics and Society"

Rhetoric appears as the connective tissue peculiar to civil society and to its proper finalities, happiness and political peace hic et nunc. (253-4)

4. **Kenneth Burke:** *A Rhetoric of Motives*

The most characteristic concern of rhetoric [is] the manipulation of men's beliefs for political ends....the basic function of rhetoric [is] the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents. (41)

5. **Covino and Joliffe:** *Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries* (1995)

Rhetoric is primarily a verbal, situationally contingent, epistemic art that is both philosophical and practical and gives rise to potentially active texts.

6. **Paolo Valesio:** *Novantiqua* (1980)

I specify now that rhetoric is the functional organization of discourse, within its social and cultural context, in all its aspects, exception made for its realization as a strictly formal metalanguage–in formal logic, mathematics, and in the sciences whose metalanguages share the same features. In other words: rhetoric is all of language, in its realization as discourse.

7. **George Kennedy:** "A Hoot in the Dark" (1992)

Rhetoric in the most general sense may perhaps be identified with the energy inherent in communication: the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expanded in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message.

8. **Francis Bacon (1561-1626):** *Advancement of Learning*

The duty and office of rhetoric is to apply reason to imagination for the better moving of the will.

9. **Bender and Wellbery:**

...that sea of communicative transactions...the impersonal drama of what occurs among us, unnoticed and without deliberation or grandeur...the dense tangle of our triviality.

10. **Lloyd Bitzer:** "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968)

In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.

11. **Edward T. Channing:** *Lectures Read to the Seniors at Harvard College* (c. 1856)

[Rhetoric is] a body of rules derived from experience and observation, extending to all communication by language and designed to make it efficient. It does not ask whether a man is to be a speaker or writer, –a poet, philosopher, or debater; but simply,–is it his wish to be put in the right way of communicating his mind with power to others, by words spoken or written. If so, rhetoric undertakes to show him rules or principles which will help to make the expression of his thoughts effective.

12. **Douglas Ehninger** (1972):

[Rhetoric is] that discipline which studies all of the ways in which men may influence each other's thinking and behavior through the strategic use of symbols.

13. **Gerard A. Hauser:** *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (1986)

Rhetoric is an instrumental use of language.... One person engages another person in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goal. It is not communication for communication's sake. Rhetoric is communication that attempts to coordinate social action. For this reason, rhetorical communication is explicitly pragmatic. Its goal is to influence human choices on specific matters that require immediate attention.

14. **C. H. Knoblauch:** "Modern Rhetorical Theory and Its Future Directions" (1985)

...rhetoric is the process of using language to organize experience and communicate it to others. It is also the study of how people use language to organize and communicate experience. The word denotes...both distinctive human activity and the "science" concerned with understanding that activity.

15. **John Locke:** *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)

[Rhetoric,] that powerful instrument of error and deceit.

16. **McCloskey:**

...merely speech with designs on the reader.

17. **Bazerman, Charles:** *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*. Madison U of Wisconsin P, 1988. 6.

The study of how people use language and other symbols to realize human goals and carry out human activities . . . ultimately a practical study offering people great control over their symbolic activity.

18. **Hyde, Michael and Craig Smith:** "Hermeneutics and Rhetoric: A Seen but Unobserved Relationship." Quarterly Journal of Speech 65 4 (1979): 347

The primordial function of rhetoric is to "make-known" meaning both to oneself and to others. Meaning is derived by a human being in and through the interpretive understanding of reality. Rhetoric is the process of making known that meaning. Is not rhetoric defined as pragmatic communication, more concerned with the contemporary audiences and specific questions than with universal audiences and general questions (360)?

19. **Sappho**

Persuasion is Aphrodite's daughter: it is she who beguiles our mortal hearts (frg 90).
   Poems and Fragments. Trans. Josephine Balmer. Seacaucus: Meadowland 1984.