POLI 272: Researching Political Communication
Fall 2010; Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:20-2:50 p.m.
Carnegie, Room 206

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Course Description: This is a research writing workshop that will give you the opportunity to work on an extended, in-depth project analyzing a form of political communication such as the rhetoric of a political or community leader, a social movement, institution or organization. In the course of the semester, you will learn how to recognize, research, and evaluate rhetorical acts from a scholarly perspective. Thus, your project will seek to enlarge the existing knowledge or explanatory frameworks about the way a certain type of political communication works in contemporary culture or in a specific historical moment.

Specifically, by the end of the class you should:

- Recognize key forms and genres of political communication.
- Understand the role of rhetoric in political culture as well as be able to map some key debates over the relationship between rhetoric and democracy.
- Know the strengths and weaknesses of different critical research methods.
- Select and apply appropriate research methods to rhetorical phenomena in ways that advance our knowledge and understanding of political communication.
- Apply the tools of rhetorical criticism to analyze political texts.
- Create theoretical insights about the way communication constitutes political culture.
- Write lucid, sustained arguments that exhibit the conventions of scholarly writing and research.
- Orally present your research and findings in a clear and engaging manner.

The course fulfills the ‘methods’ requirement for political science majors.

Required Readings:


Additional readings are placed on Moodle.

Course Guidelines:

Mode of Communication: Please do not hesitate to seek my help in case you need it. You need to think ahead, however, and contact me before an assignment is due. The best way to get my input is to come and see me in my office during my office hours. If you have a scheduling conflict and cannot come to my regular hours, please send me an email listing the times that could work for you and I will gladly schedule a special appointment for you. Please do not email me drafts of your papers. If you want me to look at something, please bring it to my office.

Attendance: Much of our class time will be devoted to parsing models of research and working on your own writing individually or in small groups. Your presence is important, therefore, not only for the sake of your own success, but also for the success of others. Missing more than 2 classes without valid and documented excuse will affect your grade. Each additional absence will result in a reduction of ½ letter grade. Valid reasons for missing a class may include acute illness or an immediate family
emergency, events that may prevent you from coming to school altogether. If such situations arise, I advise you to notify the office of the Dean of Students as well because your overall academic standing may be affected. I am committed to work with you and the college to ensure your academic success; however, we all need to be on the same page and putting our efforts toward the same goal. Participating and staying in touch are essential elements of our collaboration this semester. If you miss class for reasons other than the ones described before, I would feel no obligation to fill you in on the material that you missed and you will have to rely on the notes of peers.

**Readings and Workload:** All readings should be completed prior to coming to class on the days assigned. Come to class prepared, as much of our class-time will be devoted to the analysis of those readings and your response to them. Read the assigned materials carefully, without rushing to find their weak points, then seek the help of the instructor and your peers in class to answer any questions and concerns that you might have. This will ensure that the quality of your in-class participation will be worthy of credit. Recognize that unless you have your reading done, you may not be able to participate in the discussion during the class period.

Additionally, you will be asked to read each other’s work and provide constructive feedback. This is a type of feedback that does NOT belittle the author or his/her ideas, but instead helps him/her develop and communicate those ideas better. I will provide you with more guidance on collaboration strategies in the course of the semester.

Finally, I will expect you to write continuously and to share your writing with peers. The purpose of some of this writing will be to generate ideas and to mark your responses to the readings and to your research object. Other types of writing will aim to analyze or revise texts. In the course of the semester, you will gain experience with generative writing, expository writing, revising strategies, and editing. Your willingness to engage in these various forms of in- and out-of-class writing will count toward your participation grade.

**Participation:** Participation does not involve just the expression of your own views, but also your attention and thoughtful response to the views of others. Your success in this class will greatly depend on your willingness to participate and much of our class time will be devoted to discussing and debating issues raised in the readings. Given the writing intensive nature of this course, your participation will also take the form of in-class writing and peer review. Participation matters not only as practice for your ability to interact in a relatively formal and structured way, but also as a way to enrich the discussion and each other, complicate the issues at hand, put in practice the concepts offered in the readings and my lectures, and propel your own writing and thinking.

**Discipline & Decorum:** The purpose of debate and discussion is to allow ourselves to learn from each other. Arguments are not simply expressive acts, but transformative experiences; hence, you need to come to class willing to consider changing your initial position and opinions in the face of competing claims and evidence. Deprecating other classmates during class will not be tolerated; you must respect each other’s differences.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic Dishonesty is constituted by plagiarism, misconduct, cheating, and fabrication. Plagiarism is presenting the thoughts, words, or images crafted by others as your own. Misconduct includes tampering with grades and theft of tests, other students’ files, and so forth. Cheating involves using the answers or knowledge of others on test material. Fabrication is the creation of sources and information that are not real. **Cite all sources and do your own work.** Evidence of academic dishonesty may result in a failing grade for the assignment, the course, or academic suspension. All college-wide policies, state and federal laws apply to the classroom and violations thereof, whether in class or in relation to class assignments, will result in immediate dismissal.
Special Needs: Accommodations will be provided in cases of documented disability. Please consult with the Office of Disability Services, Phone 651-696-6220. You need to inform me of any special needs no later than the first two weeks of class.

Assignments & Grades: All assignments must be completed on time. All papers should be typed. Use Times New Roman 12 point font, double spacing and standard 1” margin sizes. When you cite specific articles, you must follow the APA style of citation. Your name, the class section, and the assignment’s due date should appear in the top right corner of the front page. Please, staple the pages. Late assignments (papers, exams) will be penalized ½ letter grade for each additional calendar day and no feedback will be provided. Assignments may be made up without penalty only if you document a severe illness, extracurricular activity, or personal tragedy either in advance (as with extra-curriculars) or within one week of the due date of the assignment (for illness or tragedies). Please contact me privately and outside of class, so that we do not take time from the class to settle these issues.

Writing Assistance: Developing your writing is an ongoing process. In addition to writing more and regularly, the more you talk and think about your writing, the more sophisticated you will become in seeing the variety of choices and strategies you can have as a writer. Working with a writing tutor is an excellent strategy for becoming a versatile, competent writer who can navigate the various genres and principles of academic and non-academic writing. The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center, located in Kagin Commons, has peer tutors available for assisting students in all stages of their writing. Hours are 9:00 A.M. – 4:30 P.M., M-F and 7 P.M. – 10 P.M., S-Th. Becky Graham and Jenny White also provide writing assistance to students during the daytime hours, M-F. You may drop in for help or call x6121 (daytime) or x6193 during evening hours to schedule an appointment. I strongly encourage you to use this resource.

A’s are 90% and above, B’s are 80%-89%, C’s are 70-79%, D’s are 60%-69. Additional guidelines for evaluating your writing will be provided in class.

First Paper (pass, marginal pass, fail) 5%
Second Paper 15%
Third Paper 15%
Fourth Paper 15%
Final Paper 25%
Final Presentation 10%
Peer Review 5%
Participation (and/or pop quizzes) 10%

First Paper: A Project Proposal. In this short paper you will introduce me to the text/object you are planning to analyze this semester. In 3-5 pages you should (a) identify the text you want to work on and what kind of a text it is. For example, you may identify it as an example of a common genre of political communication (apologia, war declaration, eulogy, etc); and (b) explain what made you choose this text. Why are you attracted to this object of study? What do you think is interesting, curious, unusual, challenging, or fascinating about it? Provide me with a preliminary argument about the significance of the text; i.e., what do you think it represents, illustrates, allows us to investigate, etc. Why should scholars care about this text?

In addition to browsing the anthologies with full texts of contemporary and historical speeches in the library, you may have luck finding an appropriate text from these two resources: the Vital Speeches of the Day database, available in paper and online edition through the library, and the website www.americanrhetoric.com.

This essay will be graded as a Pass (50 points), Marginal Pass (35 points), Fail (10 points if you do it but without fulfilling its purpose, or 0 points if you don’t do the assignment at all). Being the first
piece of writing I am going to see from you, this essay will also serve some diagnostic purposes. It will help me set up an “action plan” for you to connect you with the resources that will help you succeed. It will also help me plan ahead on the kinds of writing-related issues I should address in class during the course of the semester. So try to provide me with an honest example of your writing.

A brief note on what constitutes a permissible object of study. The object/text that you choose to analyze should be recognizable to political theorists and scientists as common artifacts of political life. Examples may include speeches of presidents, community and political leaders and officials, legislative debates, etc. While they are often deployed for the sake of political influence, objects such as rap lyrics, movies, novels, theatrical scripts, etc., will be “off limits” for the purposes of this class as we will not have sufficient time in the course of the semester to cover the political dimensions of many forms of popular culture.

Second Paper: Descriptive Analysis. In 5 to 10 pages (excluding title page and bibliography), this paper will develop a descriptive analysis of your object of study. You can follow the guidelines on pp. 28-30 and emulate the extended example on pp. 34-48 in Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric. Even as you cover the seven elements of descriptive analysis, you should treat this paper as a coherent essay; i.e., have an introduction, a thesis statement, body, and a conclusion.

The point of the descriptive analysis paper is to intensify your relationship with the text you are studying. As you pay attention to the various elements of the descriptive analysis, try to draw textual evidence about the claims you are making. For example, if you say that the text’s tone is tongue-in-cheek, provide the evidence from the text that makes you think so; i.e., point to specific phrases, word puns, metaphors, etc. Also, try to annotate the text—research and explain the meaning of references, allusions, anecdotes and other features of the object. Ultimately, the descriptive analysis paper should distill the central idea of the object—what it is trying to do (change beliefs, call to action, provide commentary, rally support or opposition, etc.) and how it is trying to do it (i.e., what are its main textual strategies).

Third Paper: Historical-Contextual Analysis. In this 5-10 page paper, you will situate your text in its appropriate historical and/or political context. Based on the descriptive analysis, you should be able to tell if the text is responding to an ongoing public controversy or debate, a particular event, a sedimented set of beliefs, or else. If so, what are they? Is the text a part of a movement? If so, what is that movement and how does the text fit within it? Draw on historical documents, secondary literature, interviews, newspaper and other eye-witness accounts to paint a picture of the events, personalities, and/or issues that the text is related to. Once again, this essay should have a coherent structure with an introduction, thesis statement, body, and conclusion.

Fourth Paper: Theoretical Frame/Literature Review. By now, based on your previous three papers, you should have developed a sense of what is the text’s most salient feature or why the text is worth talking about. In this 5-10 page paper and its accompanying concept clarification map, you will expressly articulate the significance of your project and locate the theoretical “hook” for your research. To do so, you will develop a critical literature review that explores how scholars have studied phenomena such as the one you are looking at and what are some strengths and weaknesses of their approaches. You will also create a concept clarification map (examples will be provided in class) that visually illustrates and compares these research perspectives. You will then choose a guiding perspective and a key theoretical question for your project and justify your decision. By developing the literature review, you will demonstrate where your research fits in ongoing scholarly developments and debates and what exactly is the contribution of your project.

Final Paper: This paper will be the culmination of your work this semester. The final paper is not a simple project of joining the pieces you have developed so far. Rather it will use your ongoing work to create a coherent essay with a central argument that is thoroughly developed and supported with textual evidence. Your essay will be modeled after the scholarly articles you read in the course of the semester.
Note that not all of your previous writing will fit in this paper, and new writing will have to be developed in order to complete the project. The final paper will be between 15 and 25 pages of text and will be followed by a thorough bibliography that adheres to the citation guides identified in this syllabus.

Final Presentation and Peer Review: The purpose of these elements is to teach you how to present yourself and your work in a professional setting such as an academic conference. You will be allowed 15 minutes to present your paper. This means that you will not be able to read aloud your whole paper. Instead you will have to make strategic decisions about summarizing your work in a way that brings forth your findings and scholarly contribution as well as give your audience a good sense of the material you are working with.

In the peer review presentations, a classmate will act as a respondent to a paper. In the context of academic conferences and conventions, peer reviews play an important role. They often serve as a dry run for authors hoping to publish their research. Conference respondents provide feedback that aims to improve the paper as well as clarify the value of the research. Constructive peer reviews do not seek out an author’s shortcomings in the spirit of vague intellectual competition; rather, they aim to enrich the research by pointing out insights that might have evaded the author, proposing ways to reorganize the paper to improve its flow, and suggesting additional literature that might support or challenge the author’s claims.

Tentative Schedule
Please consult the course website on Moodle for the most up-to-date schedule.

Tuesday, September 7
Introduction to POLI 272; Read Kuypers, “Chapter 1: What is Rhetoric?”

Thursday, September 9
The Process of Rhetorical Invention

Read Max, “The Making of the Speech”
Medhurst, Presidential Speechwriting: Ten Myths that Plague Modern Scholarship

Tuesday, September 14
Paper 1 due
Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism

Read Campbell and Burkholder, “Chapter 1: Rhetoric, Language, and Criticism”
Finlayson, “Political Science, Political Ideas, and Rhetoric”

Thursday, September 16
Writing Workshop

Read Campbell and Burkholder, “Chapter 2: Descriptive Analysis”
Bring to class a copy of the text you will be analyzing this semester

Tuesday, September 21
Close Textual Analysis; Structure, Evidence, and the Concept of Rhetorical Proof

Read Leff & Mohrmann, “Lincoln at Cooper Union”
Read Campbell and Burkholder, pp. 202-212 and 266-292
Thursday, September 23
Style and Narrative

Take a look at Jasinski’s bibliographic essay on “Style”
Read Windt, “The Diatribe: Last Resort for Protest”
Rowland, “The Narrative Perspective”

Tuesday, September 28
Metaphors

Read Kuypers, “Chapter 7: Criticism of Metaphor”
Ivie, “Literalizing the Metaphor of Soviet Savagery”
Osborn, “Archetypal Metaphors in Rhetoric”
Herbeck, “Athleticization of Political Process”

Thursday, September 30
Ethos and Persona

Read Pauley, “Reshaping Public Persona and the Prophetic Ethos”
Campbell, “The Discursive Performance of Femininity: Hating Hillary”

Tuesday, October 5
Writing Workshop; Descriptive Analysis Paper Drafts Due

Bring to class a copy of the text you are analyzing this semester as well as the draft of your descriptive analysis paper

Thursday, October 7
Editing Workshop;
Descriptive Analysis Papers due

Historical-Contextual Analysis

Read Campbell and Burkholder, “Chapter 3”
Zaeske, “The Promiscuous Audience Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Woman’s Rights Movement”

Tuesday, October 12
The Rhetorical Situation

Read Kupers, “Chapter 4: Situational Perspective”
Swift, “I Had and Abortion”

Thursday, October 14
Library Workshop

Tuesday, October 19
Rhetoric and Social Movements

Thursday, October 21
Writing Workshop; *Historical Contextual Analysis Paper Drafts Due*
Bring your secondary sources to class

Tuesday, October 26
Editing Workshop
*Historical Contextual Analysis Papers Due*

Theoretical framing
Read Zarefsky, Four Senses of Rhetorical History

Thursday, October 28
*Fall Break (no classes)*

Tuesday, November 2
Public Address and Public Policy

Read Campbell and Jamieson, “Inaugurating the Presidency”
Cohen, Presidential Rhetoric and the Public Agenda

Thursday, November 4
Narrative, Myth, Ideology

Read Lewis, “Narrative Form and Reagan’s Presidency”
Cloud, “The Rhetoric of Family Values”
Ivie, “The Ideology of Freedom’s Fragility”

Tuesday, November 9
Writing Workshop; *Theoretical Frame/Literature Review Paper Drafts Due*
Bring to class the articles you plan to use in your theoretical/lit. review paper

Thursday, November 11
Writing Workshop; *Theoretical Frame/Literature Review Paper Drafts Due*
Bring to class the articles you plan to use in your theoretical/lit. review paper

Tuesday, November 16
TBA, ZDK is at NCA

Thursday, November 18
*Theoretical Frame/Literature Review Paper Due*

Writing Workshop
Bring all the papers you have written this semester

Tuesday, November 23
Writing Workshop; Oral Presentation Workshop
Bring Drafts of Final Paper

Thursday, November 25
*Thanksgiving Break (No classes)*
Tuesday, November 30
Writing Workshop; Bring Drafts of Final Papers to submit to peer reviewers

Thursday, December 2
Final Presentations and Respondents' Reviews

Tuesday, December 7
Final Presentations and Respondents' Reviews

Thursday, December 9
Last Day of Class
Final Presentations and Respondents' Reviews

***Final Papers are due in my mailbox on Monday, December 13 by 4 p.m.***