



ENGLISH 3200.001: RHETORICAL HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

Title: Rhetoric and "The Good Life," Fall 2016, MON/WED 2:00PM – 3:20PM

Professor Matthew Heard | Office: LANG 409J

Office Hours: W 1:00PM – 2:00 PM

Catalog Info

ENGL 3200 explores the construction of the rhetorical tradition through canonical texts and figures; questions alternatives to the received tradition. 3 HRS. Prereqs: None.

Course Description

"Follow me." Saying this, Socrates tries to convince his audience that he knows what the GOOD LIFE is—a life of virtue, gained by engaging in the love of wisdom and the pursuit of truth. Rhetoric, at least as Plato saw it, as a form of base flattery and manipulation, has no place in Plato's/Socrates' construction of "the good life."

Meanwhile, across town from Socrates, street philosophers and teachers such as Gorgias of Leontini were teaching students that "the good life" in Athens differed wildly from "the good life" in other cultures. For Gorgias and other Sophists, rhetoric was a vital tool for understanding how people's language and habits of communication could reveal differences in the way each culture defined "the good."

If we jump ahead 400 years, to Marcus Tullius Cicero's *De Oratore* (55 BC), we find Cicero looking back at Plato and Gorgias and thinking dark thoughts about the place of rhetoric in the collapse of the Roman Empire. For Cicero, every true rhetor must invest deeply in understanding what is good. Yet, Cicero would bar from this pursuit entire classes of people that he deemed unworthy of leadership: women, slaves, and all foreigners to Rome.

From its early iteration in texts by Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient writers, the study of rhetoric in Western civilization has been closely associated with questions about "the good life." Some rhetoricians, such as Plato, have cast aside rhetoric as a barrier to healthy living. Other rhetoricians have championed rhetoric as a "first philosophy," arguing that we cannot understand "the good" unless we pay attention to how different groups think and speak about the good.

In this semester of ENGL 3200, we will study these different intersections of rhetoric and "the good life" in ancient Western texts, looking critically at how writers define "the good" and position rhetoric against their understanding of healthy living. We also will take time to look at several texts by women and non-Western writers that provide alternatives to the ideas of well-known rhetoricians such as Plato and Cicero.

While one goal of the course is to develop a working familiarity with these ancient conversations about rhetoric and good living, the course also opens discussion about how our own cultures construct "the good life." Our studies of ancient rhetoric provide a frame for understanding the cultural and rhetorical practices that help to maintain strong ideas about good living in our own society. Ancient rhetoric can be

old and stuffy, to be sure, but it also helps us pay attention to ways that our "new" ideas about truth, justice, virtue, and goodness remain deeply indebted to rhetorical practices that have been under discussion for the last 2,500 years.

"FOLLOW ME THEN, AND I WILL LEAD YOU WHERE YOU WILL BE HAPPY IN LIFE AND AFTER DEATH [...] FOR YOU WILL NEVER COME TO ANY HARM IN THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE, IF YOU ARE A REALLY GOOD AND TRUE MAN."

PLATO, *GORGIAS* (405 BC)

Big Questions opened up in the course

- What kinds of identities, experiences, and values are privileged in the ancient Western traditions of rhetorical theory?
- How does the study and practice of rhetoric open up possibilities for living this "good life?"
- What counts as "good living" in our own contemporary cultures? What rhetorical practices maintain and support this good living? How can we submit these rhetorical practices to critique in order to extend, rework, and even disrupt them?

Desired understandings facilitated by the course

- Get the gist of how traditional canonical figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and the sophists differed in what they thought rhetoric was and what they thought rhetoric could do
- Have a working knowledge of ways that female and Non-Western rhetors in the ancient world critiqued the individualism of rhetorical practice and contributed alternative rhetorics
- Find connections between ancient rhetorical theory and definitions of "the good life" in contemporary American and Mexican literature

Skills and abilities developed in the course

- Explain the main contributions of ancient thinkers to the Western rhetorical tradition
- Apply ancient theories of rhetoric to contemporary discussions about human values and ethics
- Use a working knowledge of rhetorical theory and practice to critique, disrupt, extend, or rewrite one or more contemporary constructions of "the good life"

"RHETORIC CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS THE EXERCISE OF AN ECOLOGY'S TENDENCIES TO PRODUCE GREATER CAPACITIES WITHIN ANY GIVEN ECOLOGY. WHEN WE REGISTER AN AFFECT OR REGISTER BEING AFFECTED, WE PERCEIVE AND THROUGH PERCEPTION INCREASE CAPACITIES TO AFFECT AND BE AFFECTED." -- CASEY BOYLE

Grading Breakdown

15% - Discussion Responses

10% - Discussion Leader

20% - Book Reviews (2)

30% - Final Project

25% - In-Class Quizzes, Assignments, and Participation

Course Materials Needed

- Aristotle, *ART OF RHETORIC*, ISBN: 9780674992122
- Cicero, *ON THE IDEAL ORATOR*, ISBN: 9780195091984
- Herrera, *SIGNS PRECEDING END OF THE WORLD*, ISBN: 9781908276421
- Kalanithi, *WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR*, ISBN: 9780812988406
- Plato, *PHAEDRUS*, ISBN: 9780674990401

Assignments

DISCUSSION LEADER

For one week during weeks 4-11 of the course, you will be responsible for opening up class discussion about the text we are reading. Your discussion leader assignment will require that you (1) prepare a brief, 2-3 minute commentary on the text and (2) email me a written version of your commentary on the night before you present

DISCUSSION RESPONSE

For the weeks 4-11 of the course, you will be responsible for weekly discussion posts on Blackboard. These responses generally require of you that you post a thoughtful 200-300 word response paragraph.

BOOK REVIEWS

Write a brief (500-1000 word) review of (1) Herrera's *Signs Preceding the End of the World* and (2) Kalanithi's *When Breath Becomes Air*. In your review, address the book's construction of "the good life," whether as a positive or negative model. Use our class readings in ancient rhetoric as the substance for your evaluative criteria.

FINAL PROJECT: SOCIAL COMMENTARY

Create a social commentary addressing “the good life” as it is constructed (or deconstructed) in contemporary culture. Your social commentary needs to provide an insightful, relevant, and intelligent take on one or more articulations of “the good life.” In addition to your commentary, provide a short essay that explains the rhetorical theory and practices you use in your commentary.

Course Policies:

ABSENCE: You have five free absences. Upon missing six classes, you will be dropped from the course. Coming late to class or not participating in class may result in you being counted as absent.

IN-CLASS WORK: Quizzes and in-class assignments will often take place at the beginning of class and cannot be made-up if missed. Frequent tardiness or disruptions will affect your quiz/assignment grades.

DISRUPTIONS: Excessive disruptions of our class time—including talking, sleeping, texting, cell phone usage, and doing work for other classes—hurt the class atmosphere and will hurt your grade should you engage in them. Please respect the class environment by giving your classmates and me your full attention at all appropriate times.

Assignment Policy

All written work needs to be typed and submitted online to our Blackboard site, with a paper copy brought to class. For all essays, include your name and the page number on the top right of each page (i.e. : Heard 1). Please also include a date and the course number (ENGL 3200). Use a text font for all essays (Times Roman or Garamond for example) at 12 points, with all one-inch (1”) margins, and double-spacing. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated by the assignment prompt.

“WHAT FUNCTION AGAIN IS SO KINGLY, SO WORTHY OF THE FREE, SO GENEROUS AS TO BRING HELP TO THE SUPPLIANT, TO RAISE UP THOSE THAT ARE CAST DOWN, TO BESTOW SECURITY, TO SET FREE FROM PERIL, TO MAINTAIN MEN IN THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS?” CICERO, DE INVENTIONE

ODA Policy

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable

accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The UNT Policy Manual defines plagiarism as: “(a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.” (18.1.11). I expect your writing in this course to be original and every use of someone else’s work in your writing to be marked clearly. The consequences for plagiarism both at UNT and in this course are severe, and may include automatic failure and in some cases dismissal from the university. Don’t risk it—come and

talk to me about any questionable material before turning in your assignment. I am happy to help you decide how to cite materials that might otherwise be counted as plagiarism.

Rubrics and Scoring Systems

For the purposes of this course,

“A” WORK will constitute a final score of 90-100% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is impressively sophisticated and illuminating: inventive, balanced, justified, effective, mature, and expertly-situated in time and context

“B” WORK will constitute a final score of 80-89.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is thorough and systematic: skilled, revealing, developed, perceptive, but not unusually or surprisingly original

“C” WORK will constitute a final score of 70-79.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is acceptable but limited: coherent, significant, and perhaps even insightful in places, but ultimately insufficient in organization, articulation, perception, and/or effectiveness

“D” WORK will constitute a final score of 60-69.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is incomplete and severely lacking: incoherent,

limited, uncritical, immature, undeveloped, and overall not reflective of the performance expected of UNT undergraduates

“F” WORK will constitute a final score of 0-59.99% of total points, and will represent an overall response that is unacceptable.

Campus carry and weapons

Pursuant to Texas Senate Bill 11 and the UNT Campus Carry Policy, persons with a current legally valid Concealed Carry License may carry a concealed legal handgun on or about their person in this class. All class members should read the UNT Campus Carry Policy carefully. All legal provisions associated with concealed carry on campus must be followed without fail at all times. One such provision is that any handgun must be concealed, meaning that it cannot be “openly noticeable to the ordinary observation of a reasonable person.” (UNT Campus Carry Policy). If a handgun is visible, or if any other legal requirement is violated at any moment, the person who witnesses the violation should leave the classroom and call 911 immediately. Please be aware that law enforcement officers are prepared to respond to any violations of these legal requirements for Campus Carry. No other weapons of any kind are permitted in the classroom.

Dropping the Course or withdrawing

Nov. 7: The last day to drop this course with either a W or WF

Nov. 23: The last day to withdraw from the course or receive a WF for nonattendance

Consult the UNT Registrar “Registration Guide” for full details: <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-registration-guide>





Assignment Schedule (Subject to Change)

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|----|--------|--|--------|---|
| 1 | 29-Aug | Course Intro | 31-Aug | Kalanithi, When Breath ∇ Definitions of Rhet (online) |
| 2 | 5-Sep | No Class: Labor Day | 7-Sep | Kalanithi, When Breath ∇ Corder, Rhet as Love (online) |
| 3 | 12-Sep | Kalanithi, When Breath | 14-Sep | Kalanithi, When Breath |
| 4 | 19-Sep | Plato, Phaedrus | 21-Sep | Plato, Phaedrus Due: Book Review 1 |
| 5 | 26-Sep | Plato, Phaedrus | 28-Sep | Sophists (readings online) |
| 6 | 3-Oct | Sophists (readings online) | 5-Oct | Sophists (readings online) |
| 7 | 10-Oct | Aristotle, Rhetoric | 12-Oct | Aristotle, Rhetoric |
| 8 | 17-Oct | Aristotle, Rhetoric | 19-Oct | ∇ Different Rhetorics (online) |
| 9 | 24-Oct | ∇ Different Rhetorics (online) | 26-Oct | ∇ Different Rhetorics (online) |
| 10 | 31-Oct | Cicero, De Oratore | 2-Nov | Cicero, De Oratore |
| 11 | 7-Nov | Cicero, De Oratore Last day to Drop course | 9-Nov | Cicero, De Oratore |
| 12 | 14-Nov | Herrera, Signs Preceding | 16-Nov | Herrera, Signs Preceding |
| 13 | 21-Nov | Herrera, Signs Preceding | 23-Nov | Herrera, Signs Preceding Due: Book Review 2 |
| 14 | 28-Nov | Cultural Constructions | 30-Nov | Cultural Constructions |
| 15 | 5-Dec | Cultural Constructions | 7-Dec | Cultural Constructions |
| F | 12-Dec | Final: 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm DUE: Final Project | 14-Dec | |

