

**RHETORIC AS CIVIC LITERACY (COM 183)**  
**TR, Fell 162 at 9:35 a.m. (Sec. 1)**

Instructor: Chad Woolard  
Office: Fell 422  
Office Phone: 438-8270 (direct line/voice mail)  
Office Hours: MWF 1:00-3:00 p.m. or by appointment  
E-mail: [cewoola@ilstu.edu](mailto:cewoola@ilstu.edu)

Rhetoric has been foundational to multiple disciplines including political science, communication, history, and English. The foundations of rhetoric have always been centered on politics and political discourse. COM 183 explores the relationship between civic engagement and rhetoric primarily from the perspective of the communication discipline; however, the course will explore the rhetorical strategies, skills, values, and perspectives that are at the heart of all civic engagement.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

Textbook:

Palczewski, C. H., Ice, R., & Fritch, J. (2016). *Rhetoric in civic life* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). State College, PA: Strata.

Additional articles and book chapters will be provided electronically through Reggienet.

### **COURSE GOALS & OUTCOMES**

Rhetoric as Civic Literacy is a general education course categorized within Individuals and Civic Life. In these courses students learn about functioning responsibly in their civic environment. Students develop an understanding of the complex interrelationships among people, political structures, and other dimensions of society. The course helps students understand how in the past and in the present individual freedoms and social and political environments interact. The course should actively stimulate students to ponder the socially responsible choices that educated citizens who participate in shared governance make.

Courses in the Individuals and Civic Life category of General Education address the following program objectives:

#### **I. knowledge of diverse human cultures and the physical and natural world, allowing students to**

- b. explain how the combination of the humanities, fine arts, natural and social sciences, and technology contribute to the quality of life for individuals and communities
- c. experience and reflect on global issues

#### **II. intellectual and practical skills, allowing students to**

- a. make informed judgments
- b. analyze data to examine research questions and test hypotheses
- c. report information effectively and responsibly

- d. write in a variety of genres, contexts, and disciplines
- e. deliver purposeful presentations that inform attitudes or behaviors

**III. personal and social responsibility, allowing students to**

- b. interact competently in a variety of cultural contexts
- c. demonstrate ethical decision making
- d. demonstrate the ability to think reflectively

**IV. integrative and applied learning, allowing students to**

- a. identify and solve problems
- b. transfer learning to novel situations
- c. work effectively in teams

The above program objectives articulated by General Education are reflected in the following goals specific to Rhetoric as Civic Literacy, a course in which you will:

1. Develop an understanding of the relationship between rhetoric and civic engagement.
2. Explore “democracy” and “citizenship” as complex concepts associated with different histories, meanings, and cultural practices.
3. Learn how to advocate and communicate with diverse groups of people with civility and the foundational rhetorical forms that drive a healthier democracy.
4. Identify communal problems, frame them as issues worthy of public debate, and develop proposals for solving them.
5. Become familiar with processes of persuasion and rhetoric as a mechanisms for civic engagement.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Defining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay	25 pts (5%)
Reading Propositions	100 pts (20%)
Political Ideology Survey and Essay	25 pts (5%)
Identify an Issue Culture Project	100 pts (20%)
Issue Culture Presentation	50 pts (10%)
Redefining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay	50 pts (10%)
Policy Analysis Research Proposal	25 pts (5%)
Policy Analysis Final Project	100 pts (20%)
Policy Analysis Presentation	25 pts (5%)

Total: 500 pts

The grading scale is a standard ten percentage point scale:

90-100% = A; 80%-89% = B; 70%-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F

**Defining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay**

Write a brief (1-2 page) paper in which you 1) Describe how you, personally, define rhetoric and civic engagement 2) Outline your academic and professional interests and how rhetoric and civic

engagement is both relevant *and* beneficial to your area of study. Briefly discuss how your major can be enhanced by knowledge of civic engagement, and how, with the knowledge you gain in your studies, you can work to create positive change in the world. This essay does not require sources, I just want you to think about your experience and these issues; however, if there is a source that has influenced you make sure to cite it conforming to APA (6<sup>th</sup>) citation style.

### **Reading Propositions**

In addition to the textbook, additional readings will be available through Reggienet. You will be required to complete a reading proposition for each textbook chapter and course reading. A reading proposition is a paragraph in which you summarize a concept or an aspect of the additional readings then present a comment or a question. These are intended for students to engage and question the readings. Propositions also give the student at least one talking point to participate in during class discussion. Make sure that you give the page number where the concept/aspect can be found in the reading. These will be graded as participation assignments as long as you provide some cogent insight into the subject of the reading. This is not a summary of the reading, but rather a point of discussion about the reading.

Here is an example:

In Burke's "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle" he makes the claim that the German people wanted unity after WWI and were willing to meet Hitler half-way in terms of support. Hitler brought a vision, however irrational, and the people accepted it. He also talks about people's general dislike of internal conflict (pp. 205-206). In terms of organizational communication, is there a tendency for people to look for unity, and does this need for unity sometime supersede the rationality or "truthfulness" of a vision or account?

### **Political Ideology Survey and Essay**

You will be required to complete the Pew Research Center's "Political Typology Quiz" survey (<https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/>) and write a brief essay about the results.

Essay Requirements:

Part 1: What is your political ideology based upon the Pew survey? What are some key social/political issues that you could identify through the survey questions?

Part 2: How accurate was the survey results to your personal political ideology and/or values? Are there issues and values that you found to be more and/or less important to your political identity?

Part 3: Reflecting upon your political ideology are there any bridge issues or points of common ground between your ideology and other political ideology (e.g. are there issues that core conservatives and solid liberals share in common?) Remember Pew identifies nine distinct political ideologies in U.S. culture. How might you build common ground with people with different political ideologies from your own?

Essays should be 1-2 double spaced pages.

### **Identify an Issue Culture Project**

You will be required to pick a single, relevant public issue and identify and compare how that issue is discussed across different news sources and how the issues are discussed through social

media. The goal here is to identify different, competing perspectives on a single issue and to analyze the rhetorical strategies used. Following the framework set forth in the Gamson and Lasch (1983) reading, identify at least three different perspectives for both news and social media and identify the framing devices (i.e. the metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images used in the rhetorical texts) and the reasoning devices (i.e. the roots, consequences and appeals to principles used in the rhetorical texts). You will need to write about each perspective and prepare a framing matrix for your issue. Remember that there may be multiple sources/texts that advance the same claims and arguments. Finally, you will need to identify the perspective that is the most compelling and identify the rhetorical elements that justify your decision.

### **Issue Culture Presentation**

You will present your Issue Culture Project in class. You will need to prepare a visual aid of your framing matrix and include a reference page for your project. You will need to prepare a short (3-5 minute) presentation that explains each perspective you identified and provide rhetorical examples of each perspective.

### **Redefining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay**

You will write a short paper which follows the guidelines of the first Defining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement paper, but this time you will have had the benefit of weeks of classroom discussion which, hopefully, will have influenced your ideas and rhetoric and civic engagement and how your own personal pursuits can work in tandem with them to create positive change. In this paper you need to restate your original definitions, explain how your definitions have changed, and incorporate the class reading and discussion into your new definition. Your reading propositions should help guide your definition. You need to cite at least 6 different sources in your essay.

### **Policy Analysis Research Proposal**

For the policy analysis project, you will need to select a current national or local problem and offer policy recommendations to address this problem. Keep in mind that the problem can be a national issue; however, you must focus upon policies that can be implemented on the State, regional, or local level. You will complete a 20-25 page paper and a 6-7 minute presentation for the final project. The research proposal should be 2-4 pages and provides a short introduction to your project and provides a research strategy.

Proposal Outline:

- I. The Problem
  - A. Identify the problem
  - B. Who is affected by the problem?
  - C. How widespread is the problem?
  - D. What are the harms associated with the problem?
  - E. What are the key terms associated with the problem area (think of these as search terms)?
- II. Target Audience
  - A. Possible Agents of Action (who could address the problem, i.e. Federal, State, or Local Government; Nongovernmental Organizations; Departments; etc.)

- B. Who would be your target audience (remember this may not be the same as the agents of action)?
- C. How would you adapt your project to fit the target audience?
- III. Policy Alternatives
  - A. Identify three policy options that may address the problem (short, 1 or 2 sentences for each policy)
    - i. Policy 1
    - ii. Policy 2
    - iii. Policy 3
- IV. Research Strategy
  - A. Develop at least three research questions (What do you need to know/research about your topic)
    - i. Research Question 1
      - 1. What kind of information would answer this question?
    - ii. Research Question 2
      - 1. What kind of information would answer this question?
    - iii. Research Question 3
      - 1. What kind of information would answer this question?
  - B. Identify outside contacts you may be able to talk to about your project (e.g. Center for the Study of Education Policy, Stevenson Center, Student Counseling, faculty, staff, subject librarians, etc.)
  - C. Tentative Reference page with at least four possible sources (you just need the citations for now)

### **Policy Analysis Final Project**

You will need to select a current national or local problem and offer policy recommendations to address this problem. Keep in mind that the problem can be a national issue; however, you must focus upon policies that can be implemented on the State, regional, or local level. You will complete a 20-25 page paper and a 6-7 minute presentation.

Project Outline:

- I. Introduction & Background
  - A. Draw attention to the problem
  - B. Describe the problem
  - C. Describe the harms associated with the problem
  - D. Give a brief history of the problem
  - E. Define the key terms
  - F. Identify the key issues/perspectives
- II. Policy Comparison
  - A. What policy actions have been implemented? How effective were these policies?
  - B. Identify policy alternatives including the cost, benefits, and feasibility of each alternative.
- III. Policy Recommendations
  - A. Identify the policy or policies you would recommend to solve the problem
  - B. Who would be the agent of action (who would implement your policy)

- C. Describe the cost, benefits, and feasibility of the policy
  - D. How would the policy solve for the harms of the problem
  - E. Develop a timeline for the implementation of the policy
  - F. Anticipate counter arguments or counter proposals to your policy and provide a response to the counter arguments.
- IV. Conclusion
- A. Summarize the problem, harm, and your policy plan
  - B. Include a Call to Action (What you want your audience to do about the problem, e.g. contact their congress person, city council member, etc.)

### **Policy Analysis Presentation**

You will present a persuasive speech based upon your policy analysis project. The speech will be 6-7 minutes, with a 1 minute question and answer period. You will need to prepare a formal outline (same format as the persuasive speech for COM 110) with references and will need to create a visual aid. You will also need to address counter arguments to your proposed policy. I recommend Monroe's Motivational sequence:

- I. Introduction (Monroe's Attention)
- II. Body
  - A. Need
  - B. Satisfaction
  - C. Visualization
- III. Conclusion (Monroe's Call to Action)

## Tentative Schedule

<b>Course Topics</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b><u>Week 1 (Aug 19-23)</u></b> (T) Rhetoric as Symbolic Action <b>Assign Defining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay</b> <b>Assign Reading Proposition Assignment</b>	<b>Palczewski et al., 2016,</b> <b>Chap. 1</b>
(Th) Rhetorical Criticism and Civic Engagement	<b>Sillars &amp; Gronbeck, 2001,</b> <b>Chap. 1 &amp; 2</b>
<b><u>Week 2 (Aug 26-30)</u></b> (T) “Free Speech,” Rhetoric, & Communication: Foundations <b>Defining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement</b> <b>Essay Due</b>	<b>Lenz, 2013; Pollock, 2013;</b> <b>Cornwell, 2013</b>
(Th) “Free Speech,” Rhetoric, & Communication: Issues and Applications	<b>Kahl, 2013; Zompetti et al.,</b> <b>2013; Tedford &amp; Herbeck,</b> <b>2017; Volokh, 2013</b>
<b><u>Week 3 (Sep 2-6)</u></b> (T) Defining Citizenship and Civic Engagement <b>Assign Pew Political Ideology Survey and</b> <b>Essay</b>	<b>Dalton, 2009;</b> <b>Woolard, 2017; Tsosie,</b> <b>2016; Terrill, 2015;</b> <b>Zompetti, 2006</b>
(Th) Information Literacy, Fake News, and “Spin”	<b>Woolard, 2018; Jackson &amp;</b> <b>Jamieson, 2007; Grabe &amp;</b> <b>Myrick, 2016</b>
<b><u>Week 4 (Sep 9-13)</u></b> (T) Critical Rhetoric <b>Reading Propositions, Part 1 Due</b>	<b>McKerrow, 1989</b>
(Th) Power, Ideology, and Rhetorical Criticism <b>Pew Political Survey and Essay Due</b>	<b>Sillars &amp; Gronbeck, 2001,</b> <b>Chap. 12; Pew, 2017</b>
<b><u>Week 5 (Sep 16-20)</u></b> (T) Rhetoric and Language	<b>Palczewski et al., 2016,</b> <b>Chap. 2; Edelman, 1964;</b> <b>Burke, 1967</b>
(Th) Issues Cultures and Rhetorical Framing <b>Assign Issue Culture Project</b>	<b>Gamson &amp; Lasch, 1983;</b> <b>Kwan &amp; Graves, 2013</b>

**Week 6 (Sep 23-27)**

(T) Visual Rhetoric

**Assign “Find a Political Meme” Activity**

(Th) Memes, Visual Culture, and Politics

**Palczewski et al., 2016,  
Chap. 3; Bouchers, 2013**

**Woods & Hahner, 2019**

**Week 7 (Sep 30-Oct 4)**

(T) Argument and Narrative

(Th) Argument and Narrative: Part 2

**Palczewski et al., 2016,  
Chap. 4 & 5**

**Black, 1992**

**Week 8 (Oct 7-11)**

(T) Affect, Cognition and Politics

(Th) Incivility and Divisive Discourse

**Reading Propositions, Part 2 Due**

**Assign Policy Analysis Project and Proposal**

**Mackuen, et al., 2008;  
Neuman et al., 1992**

**Herbst, 2010; Zompetti,  
2017; Ivie, 2015**

**Week 9 (Oct 14-18)**

(T) Issues Cultures Presentations

(Th) Issues Cultures Presentations

**Issue Culture Project Due**

**Week 10 (Oct 21-25)**

(T) Rhetors and Audiences

(Th) Rhetors and Audiences: Part 2

**Policy Analysis Proposal Due**

**Palczewski et al., 2016,  
Chap. 6 & 7**

**Week 11 (Oct 28-Nov 1)**

(T) Rhetorical Situations

(Th) Publics and Counterpublics

**Palczewski et al., 2016,  
Chap. 8**

**Palczewski et al., 2016,  
Chap. 9**

**Week 12 (Nov 4-8)**

(T) Public Policy and Policy Analysis

(Th) Policy Analysis Workshop

**Dunn, 1992, Chap. 3, 5, & 8**



**Week 13 (Nov 11-15)**

(T) Social Movement Rhetoric

**Assign Redefining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay**

**Bowers et al, 2010, Chap. 1  
& 2; Stewart et al. 2013,  
Chap. 3, 6, & 8**

(Th) **No Class, NCA Conference**

**Reading Propositions, Part 3 Due**

**Week 14 (Nov 18-22)**

(T) Policy Presentations

(Th) Policy Presentations

**Week 15 (Nov 25-19)**

**No Class, Fall Break**

**Week 16 (Dec 2-6)**

(T) Policy Presentations

(TH) Policy Analysis Workshop

**Redefining Rhetoric and Civic Engagement Essay Due**

**Week 17 (Dec 9-13)**

**(TBA) Finals Week: Policy Analysis Paper Due**